KU LEUVEN

FACULTEIT SOCIALE WETENSCHAPPEN

Polish EU Officials in Brussels: Living on Europlanet?

Julia ROZANSKA

Proefschrift aangeboden tot het verkrijgen van de
graad van Doctor in de Sociale en culturele antropologie

Promotor: Em. Prof. Dr. Johan Leman
Copromotor: Prof. Dr. Noel Salazar
Onderzoekseenheid: Centrum Interculturalisme, Migratie en Minderheden [IMMRC]

2017

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Acknowledgements **5**

Chapter 1. Introduction **7**
1.1. Outline of the content **10**
1.2. Presentation and the added value of my research **13**
1.3. Setting the context **16**
1.3.1. Poles in Belgium 16
1.3.2. EU officials as elites 18
1.3.3. The EU institutions and their staff 22
1.3.4. The heterogeneous culture of the European Commission 23
1.3.5. Recruitment of EU civil servants 26
1.3.6. EU officials from new member states: similar or different? 27
1.3.7. "Eurocrats": who they are 28
1.3.8. Brussels 29
1.3.8.1. The multifaceted and pluricultural character of Brussels 30
1.3.8.2. The impact of the EU institutions on Brussels 31

Chapter 2. Theoretical framework **35**
2.1. Community and criteria of exclusion and inclusion **35**
2.1.1. The concept of community 36
2.1.1.1. Community as a relational and symbolic construct 36
2.1.1.2. From geographically delineated community to community in mind 37
2.1.2. Boundaries 38
2.1.3. Stereotypes 42
2.1.3.1. Legacy of a stereotyped view of the Poles in Belgium 44
2.1.3.2. Stereotyping Eurocrats in Belgium 45
2.1.3.3. Polish EU officials: a double scapegoat? 48
2.2. On the road: movement and movers **50**
2.2.1. Migration, mobility and boundaries 50
2.2.2. High-skilled foreigners: privileged movers 52
2.2.3. Mobility within the European Union: before and after the EU enlargement 54
2.2.4. Eurocrats: migrants or expats? 55
2.3. Starting a new life: adaptation and integration **57**
2.3.1. Complexity in social and cultural integration 59
2.3.2. Integration 63
2.3.3. Adaptation 65
2.3.4. Transnationalism 67
2.3.5. Integration and adaptation of expatriates in Brussels 70
2.3.6. Integration of EU officials in Brussels 72
2.4. Expatriates and EU officials in the host society **74**
2.4.1. Creation and manipulation of "social boundaries" in the expatriate world 74
2.4.2. Within the boundaries: the social life of expatriates 75
2.4.3. Across the boundaries: "expatriates' spaces" 77
2.4.4. Social life of expats in Brussels 78
2.4.5. Socialising practices and spatial encapsulation of EU officials 81
2.4.5.1. Work-time social networks in Brussels: national or multinational? 81
2.4.5.2. Nationality and socialising practices of the employees of the EU institutions 82
2.4.5.3. Free time networking vs. work time networking: separation or continuum? 83
2.4.5.4. The EU officials and the Belgians 84
2.4.5.5. Eurocrat enclaves in Brussels? 85
2.5. Identification and its bases **86**
2.5.1. The notion of identification 88
2.5.2. Identity, space and place-making in the mobility context 89

2.5.3. Ethnicity: theoretical considerations 92
2.5.4. Nation and Nationalism 96
2.5.4.1. The concepts of nation, ethnicity and nationalism 96
2.5.4.2. The civic versus the ethnic model of nation and nationalism 97
2.5.4.3. National identity: now and tomorrow 98
2.6. Polishness 100
2.6.1. Distinctiveness and sameness 101
2.6.2. Polishness as a constructed identity 103
2.6.3. Polish identity today – conflicting discourses 106
2.6.4. Polishness and Europe 107
2.7. Europe, Europeanness and related notions 108
2.7.1. Europe: boundaries and "cultural stuff" inside 109
2.7.2. Europeanness 110
2.7.3. European Union 111
2.7.4. Enlargement of the EU and its implications 112
2.7.5. Europeanization 114
2.7.6. European integration 116
2.8. Towards European identity 117
2.8.1. Defining European identity 117
2.8.2. The making of European identity 118
2.8.3. What kind of European identity is possible? 120
2.8.4. National and European levels of identification 121
2.8.5. European identity and the Other 124
2.8.6. European identity as a product of the EU 125
2.8.7. European lifestyles and values and identification with Europe 127
2.8.8. Mobility and its impact on Europe and feeling European 127
2.8.9. EU officials and their identity 128
2.8.9.1. The process of "engrenage" and its role 128
2.8.9.2. The multiple identities of EU officials 131
2.8.9.3. Being a foreigner and EU official: the creation of a sense of belonging 132

Chapter 3. Methodology 135
3.1. Epistemological underpinnings of the research 135
3.2. The personal context of the research 136
3.3. Gaining access from a perspective of "quasi-insider" 140
3.4. Research sites 145
3.5. Research participants 146
3.6. Methods employed 148
3.6.1. Participant observation 149
3.6.2. Questionnaires 151
3.6.3. Interviewing 153
3.7. Data analysis and writing up data: a note on possibility of being objective 156
3.8. Definition and methodological challenges of the anthropology of elites 159
3.9. How ethnographic is my research? 164

Chapter 4. Research findings 169
4.1. The Polish EU officials in Brussels 170
4.1.1. Who they are: a presentation of the principal actors in my research 170
4.1.2. Why they are here 191
4.1.2.1. Motivation to come and intention to stay in Brussels 191
4.1.2.2. Reasons for taking part in the competition and working in the EU institutions 193
4.1.2.3. Motivation to stay or leave Belgium and the EU institutions 196
4.1.3. Their spaces 197

4.1.3.1. Insignificant role of the Polish Church 198
4.1.3.2. Meeting places of the Polish EU institutions community 199
4.1.3.3. The Virtual Community of Polish EU officials in Brussels 202
4.1.4. Conclusions on "Who they are", "Why they are here" and "their spaces" 205
4.2. The perception of the host environment: Poles in Brussels, local society and space 208
4.2.1. Brussels 209
4.2.1.1. Perception of Brussels: before and after arrival 209
4.2.1.2. Book of complaints and compliments about Belgium 215
4.2.1.3. Criticism regarding the local "reality" 219
4.2.2. Polish communities in Brussels: one or more? 222
4.2.3. Conclusions on "the host environment" 238
4.3. Integration from the EU officials' perspective 243
4.3.1. Adaptation and integration in Brussels 244
4.3.1.1. Being adapted as understood by Polish EU officials 245
4.3.1.2. How does it work in practice? 250
4.3.1.3. Eagerness and ability to speak the local languages: evolution 255
4.3.1.4. Spatial arrangements: leaving an EU bubble? 259
4.3.1.4.1. The current spatial arrangement of the Polish EU officials 260
4.3.1.4.2. Evolution in spatial arrangements of the follow up group 264
4.3.1.5. Interest in local matters 265
4.3.1.6. Social activities and associative life 270
4.3.1.7. Attachment to Brussels: what if the EU institutions moved to another city? 273
4.3.1.8. Brussels: the city of expats? 276
4.3.1.9. Place of "belonging" 279
4.3.2. Daily life 281
4.3.2.1. Change of lifestyle after arrival in Brussels? 282
4.3.2.2. Spare time: "expat" spaces or Belgian spaces? 284
4.3.2.3. Attending EU restricted social events 289
4.3.2.4. Belgian public celebrations 290
4.3.3. Social life 291
4.3.3.1. Working overtime? 291
4.3.3.2. Making friends in Brussels 297
4.3.3.3. The circles of friends: mixing private and professional contacts? 303
4.3.3.4. Evolution of social contacts 307
4.3.4. Conclusions on integration 316
4.4. Perception of attitudes towards Polish EU officials 322
4.4.1. "Are [we still] the land of cleaning ladies and construction workers"? 322
4.4.2. "We don't work, have too big salaries, are arrogant and don't want to integrate": stereotypes on Eurocrats, perception of xenophobic attitudes 324
4.4.3. New member states' officials as "distant Others"? 328
4.4.3.1. Attitude of old member states' officials to Polish EU officials and Poles in general 328
4.4.3.2. Attitude of Belgians toward the EU officials and Poles in general 330
4.4.4. Conclusions on the perception of attitudes toward Polish EU officials 332
4.5. Transnationalism 334
4.5.1. Contacts with Poland: tangible connection 335
4.5.1.1. Contact with the home country 335
4.5.1.2. Frequency and quality of contacts with friends in Poland, possible evolution 337
4.5.1.3. Celebrating important feasts 340
4.5.1.4. Access to Polish goods and services 341
4.5.1.5. Close friends: in Belgium or in Poland? 343
4.5.2. Mental connection 345
4.5.2.1. Main sources of information 345
4.5.2.2. Following the developments in Poland and understanding Poland today 348
4.5.2.3. Would they come back to Poland? 356
4.5.3. Conclusions on transnationalism 361

4.6. Identification patterns 362
4.6.1. Identification of Polish EU officials: different levels 363
4.6.2. Polishness 365
4.6.2.1. Important historical events 367
4.6.2.2. Important Polish historical figures 370
4.6.2.3. What does it mean to be Polish? 372
4.6.2.4. Polish national features 377
4.6.2.5. Polish traditions and ways of maintenance of Polishness 379
4.6.2.6. Feeling European versus feeling Polish 383
4.6.2.7. The past and present performance of the Poles in different domains 386
4.6.2.8. Attachment to Poland and different aspects of Polishness 391
4.6.3. Europeanness 391
4.6.3.1. Being European: inborn or chosen? 393
4.6.3.2. European values 396
4.6.3.3. Features all Europeans have in common: distinctiveness from the "Others" 397
4.6.3.4. Employment in the EU institutions as a "rite de passage": becoming more European since working for the EU? 400
4.6.3.5. Relevance of the pro-European attitude for the job 406
4.6.3.6. "Cogs in the wheel": making a difference through work in the EU institutions? 408
4.6.3.7. What does the European integration mean? 411
4.6.3.8. Europeanness of Poles 414
4.6.4. Conclusions on Polishness and Europeanness 418

Chapter 5. General conclusions: "Europlanet"? 425
5.1. Boundaries or "criteria of exclusion and inclusion" 427
5.2. Social integration 433
5.3. Cultural integration 436
5.4. Transnationalism 437
5.5. Remaining Polish 439
5.6. Towards European identity? 443
5.7. How much Polishness in Europeanness? 445
5.8. Why do I refer to "Europlanet"? 446
5.9. In a nutshell … 447
5.10. Questions for further research 450

Appendices 453
Appendix A 453
Appendix B 456
Appendix C 462

References 465

Summary 495

Samenvatting 497

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Chapter 1. Introduction

The present study focuses on Polish EU officials in Brussels, who mostly arrived in Belgium shortly after the accession of Poland to the European Union in 2004.

The research objectives of the project are twofold:

(1) to offer an insight into the social and cultural integration[1] of Polish EU officials, but also, more generally, into their social life;

(2) to explore the identification patterns of the research participants.

As regards the first objective, the main research question is: how does the social life of the Polish EU officials in Brussels look like from their own perspetive and what does it tell us about their cultural and social integration. The research should explain what happened and why: with whom (and with what intensity) they socialise, but also what are the feelings, convictions, and attitudes at the origin of their choices. The theoretical anthropological frame of it is Eriksen's (2007) approach to "complexity" in social and cultural integration. I will apply some elements of this approach, where the author makes a distinction between criteria of social inclusion and exclusion and those of cultural inclusion and exclusion, both from the perspective of the immigrant and that of the indigenous society. This brings me to more specific questions I am trying to address in this thesis. How do they live? Whom do they socialise with? How do they understand integration? Do they feel integrated? How do they perceive other groups of population and how they think they are perceived? What ties have they made in the new environment and what ties do they maintain with their homeland? Furthermore, throughout my research I kept coming back to the issue which is central to any community: where, how, and by whom are the boundaries (i.a. Barth 1996, 1998, 2000; A.P.

[1] I use this term in two senses throughout my research: in a broader sense used by Eriksen (2007), embracing both social and cultural integration, and in the sense given to it by my research participants who understood it as becoming a part of the society and deep penetration into that society's structures, as opposed to "adaptation" understood as acquiring an ease in everyday contacts, understanding the cultural codes, usages and behavior patterns of the "locals".

Cohen 1994, A.P. 1998) created, maintained, transformed, or abandoned? How are the boundary markers defined? Is the researched group subject to any boundaries imposed from the outside? I will also refer to other literature, notably on "realms" (social spaces) (Lofland 1989, 1998) and on transnationalism (i.a. Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton-Blanc 1995; Glick Schiller, Basch and Szanton-Blanc 1995; Colic-Peisker 2006; Vertovec 2009). Out of various relevant concepts and theories originating both in anthropology and in other disciplines, I chose only a few which seemed to be most suitable for my research.

Concerning the second objective, the main question to be addressed is: what kind of identification can Polish EU officials experience? More specific questions follow: what Polishness means for them? What does it mean for them to be European? Have they become more European since they started their career in the EU institutions? What is the relationship between their Polishness and their Europeanness?

I will firstly examine how Polishness is understood, manifested, and sustained in the specific conditions of living and working abroad in a highly international environment as well as in the context of socio-cultural interactions with different groups inhabiting Brussels. Secondly, I will look at the emergence of the European dimension of their identity and its relation to the national component. This research therefore aims to find out whether Polish EU officials are becoming more European via the process of enmeshing into the EU institutions and its culture. I will investigate their own understanding of Europeanness and what being European means to them.

If Lyn H. Lofland distinguishes attitudes and practices related at the "public", the "parochial", and the "private realms" (1989, 1998), my research has been performed, to a significant extent, in what I would qualify as a semi-private realm. [2] The latter is not open for everyone, ethnically and socially speaking, but features an ethnic and social private-like

[2] In this thesis I refer to a semi-public realm as a "parochial realm", as defined by Lofland (1989) following Hunter (1985), see also footnote 121. I will also refer to semi-private realms, which I see as semi-public realms with access restricted to Polish EU civil servants.

character. Many of my informal conversations, and much of my participant observation, takes place in such semi-private realms, often created by the Polish and, very probably, also other EU civil servants.

The use of references to "semi-public", "parochial" and "semi-private" realms requires short explanation. These concepts are used in different meanings. Ali Madanipour refers to "a semi-private, semi-public realm, where a smaller number of urban residents may be aware of each other and of their differences from the rest of the citizens" (2003:209). This is similar to the "parochial" realm, as defined by Hunter (1985) and referred to by Lofland (1989, 1998). Lofland (1973) also refers, in an earlier article to "semiprivate" space, understood as a public space in the process of "privatisation", meant to become "private". However, I will refer to "semi-private" realm in yet another meaning – as a variant of "parochial" realm, characterized by voluntary restriction of interpersonal networks to a specific ethnic or social category. It is, therefore, a private sphere planted in the parochial realm – like a "Polish table" in a pub.

The theoretical underpinnings that this thesis relies upon (such as the concept of "integration") are not limited to purely anthropological ones for at least two reasons. Firstly, an important part of the existing literature on expatriates and EU officials (see e.g., Favell 2001a, 2003a, 2003b, 2008a; Suvarierol 2007, 2008, 2009; Cailliez 2004) refers to non-anthropological concepts and theories. Such references are therefore useful to maintain a "dialogue" with the previous findings. Secondly, most of the participants in my study referred to these notions to describe their situation. I thus take an "emic" approach[3] in "an attempt … to understand the conceptual system of the observed" (De Vos 1995:45). At the same time, I believe, the use of such cross-disciplinary *instrumentaria* does not deprive the thesis of its anthropological character.

[3] Understood as "the insider's … perspective of reality" (Fetterman 1989:30).

1.1. Outline of the content

The dissertation consists of five main parts.

Chapter 1, following a brief introduction and presentation of the research field, sketches the research context and discusses the theoretical framework of this thesis. At the first step, it concisely describes various categories of Poles in Belgium. It then introduces the concept of elites and reflects on the elitist character of EU officials. This is followed by sections presenting the EU Commission and its employees. Subsequently, it concentrates on the relation between the specific character of Brussels (as a model of a plural society without a well-defined core) and the presence of EU institutions in the city.

The consecutive Chapter 2 offers an overview of the concepts relevant for this dissertation, as well as a review of the literature concerning these concepts, allowing me to contextualize the results of my research: (1) community and criteria of exclusion and inclusion (including the role of boundaries; stereotypes and their impact on adaptation and socialising practices); (2) migration, mobility and movers; (3) adaptation and integration (including transnationalism, with a special focus on the body of literature concerning integration in Brussels). This general conceptual framework will be followed by an overview of the literature concerning (4) highly skilled professionals (expatriates and EU officials), and their socialising patterns. Eriksen's (2007) multidimensional approach to social and cultural integration will provide the over-arching anthropological framework.

Further concepts explained in this chapter relate to the second objective of my research and pertain to (5) identification and its bases (including theoretical considerations on ethnicity, nation and nationalism with a specific emphasis on the distinction between "civic" and "ethnic" models), and (6) Polishness and its specificities related to the historical background. Subsequently, the key themes in literature on (7) several concepts related to Europe, which are relevant for my dissertation, and on (8) European identity (with a

particular focus on its very possibility, its components, the process of *engrenage*, as well as on the impact of mobility on feeling European) will be explored.

This theoretical background will serve to situate the results of my research.

Chapter 3 explains my methodological choices and addresses related challenges and shortcomings. These are notably linked to the "elite" character of the researched group and to me being a "quasi-insider". The chapter describes the research process, its sites and participants, and contains a presentation of the methods employed in the study. It also explains how the data were analysed and reflects on the ethnographic character of my study.

Chapter 4 presents the research findings and discusses and summarizes the research results. It is based on 50 questionnaires, 21 semi-structured, face-to-face interviews, and participant observation mostly conducted during social and cultural events. As regards the part on adaptation and integration, the text is structured following the logic of Eriksen's approach to integration as presented in his article on complexity (2007). The first four sections correspond to the various factors affecting integration (in the broader sense used by Eriksen), notably: (1) the characteristics of the newcomer group, consisting of the presentation of my interviewees and their path to Brussels, short life histories of each, their motivation for coming to Brussels, and the spaces they occupy; (2) the perception of the "host environment" by the incoming group, including the perception of Brussels and life in the city, as well as the perception of one important group of the inhabitants, namely other Poles in Brussels. At this stage certain broad understanding of the possible directions of integration should become possible (integration with a larger society or with a specific community?). The dissertation follows with sections pertaining to attitudes and perceptions directly related to both the cultural integration (close to the genuine concept of adaptation, as defined by my research participants themselves) and social integration of Polish EU officials in Brussels. First comes a section on the (3) attitudes, preferences, and strategies of the newcomer group.

In this context, I elaborate not only on their understanding of the crucial concepts and on their experiences regarding (what they call) integration and adaptation, but also on their settlement choices, their daily life (with a focus on a possible change in lifestyle as an outcome of working for EU institutions), their frequenting of Belgian or "expat-oriented" spaces, associative life, and interest in local matters, social life (especially on the patterns of making friends and the evolution of social contacts, both private and work-related), and so forth. This is followed by a section on the attitudes of the "host society", as perceived by the research participants, with a special focus on the stereotyping of Polish EU officials in their "double scapegoat" role. Finally, I complete this picture with considerations related to links between Polish EU officials and their home country to see if one can refer, in their case, to the concept of transnationalism.

Throughout these sections, I adopt a predominantly emic perspective, and thus the descriptions of the "host environment" are based mostly on the perception of it by Polish EU officials. Therefore, it can by no means be considered a source of knowledge about the city or its inhabitants. What affects the integration of the incomer group is more how the environment is perceived than how it actually is (if the latter can at all be claimed) or how it is seen by the researcher or other observers.

The last sections concern the identity of Polish EU officials in Brussels. The purpose of this part of the research is to find out if we can observe, in their case, the emergence of a supranational, European identity. After a short discussion of the basic identitary choices expressed by my research participants, I continue with a more in-depth analysis of their Polishness. The aim is not only to verify to what extent they "remain Polish", but also to understand the type of Polishness they represent, the shared myths which are at the origin of their ethnic and national identity. This will be followed by a reflection on the European identity of Polish EU officials – its relation to Polishness, its nature and basis.

Each section is followed by conclusions summarising the main findings and (where relevant) comparing them with the existing literature. The concluding chapter includes more general conclusions and some overarching considerations pertaining to the most interesting – in my view – findings presented in my thesis. I also attempt to flag possible new areas of inquiry to be addressed in the future.

It must be stressed that this dissertation does not intend to provide an organization case study as such, but instead focuses on the private life of Polish EU officials.

1.2. Presentation and the added value of my research

As Charlotte Aull Davies observes, "all researchers are to some degree connected to, or part of, the object of their research" (2008:3). This is so in my case: firstly, I am an "expat" in Brussels myself, secondly, I am Polish, and thirdly, my husband is an EU civil servant. I arrived in Belgium in 2005, together with my partner, who had obtained a permanent job in the EU Commission, and thus more or less at the same time as many of my research participants. I could observe how the "community" of Polish EU officials in Brussels was "born"[4] and I have become increasingly interested in what form it will take, if it will evolve in time, and how. In fact, I witnessed many phenomena described by my respondents, yet at the same time from a slightly different angle. As I had the opportunity to observe this process from the very beginning, I assumed I was well placed to conduct an anthropological study on this community (although I knew I would remain subject to some typical restrictions related to the "elite" character of my research group). For these reasons, studying Polish EU officials was somehow a natural choice.

Undoubtedly, my aforementioned "quasi-insider" position, provided me with privileged, context-specific information over a long period of time and also facilitated access to this group. The present doctoral dissertation is a continuation of my previous research on

[4] To what extent we can refer to a community here will be discussed further in the thesis.

Polish EU officials in Brussels, which I concluded with a Master's thesis in Social and Cultural Anthropology, entitled "The Euro-Polish community in Brussels" (Rozanska 2009). The previous research has left me with some queries, and I have also broadened the scope of the study, adding new research themes and new participants.

Since I have examined Polish EU officials from the beginning of their careers in Brussels, I have found it interesting to examine possible developments across time (once they felt more confident and possibly well settled in their new socio-cultural environment) to find out whether they feel at least partly integrated in Brussels, what integration means in their case, and whether their identifications have evolved and how.

However, the subject of this dissertation was not chosen exclusively based on the convenience of my situation, but also because this specific group of EU officials in Brussels have been, until now, understudied. Indeed, there has been no similar study performed on the community of Polish EU officials in Brussels yet (nor on other national groups of EU officials except for the British (Cailliez 2004), who might be leaving Brussels in the near future anyway). I also find this group an interesting subject of anthropological study because I feel they might constitute a particular "third" category of foreigners in Brussels "standing" somewhere between the category of "migrants" and "expatriates". Moreover, as EU institutions constitute a kind of "laboratory" of European consciousness (see e.g., Bellier and Wilson 2000a:17; McDonald 2012:542), I hope this research can feed reflection upon the future of the European identification.

Even if there is, nowadays, a number of publications directly or indirectly related to EU institutions and EU civil servants from "old" member states,[5] EU officials from new member states are still understudied. Most of the available publications on Poles in Brussels

[5] Among the most important literature of on subject, the following works should be quoted: Abélès (2000, 2004); Abélès and Bellier (1996); Abélès, Bellier, and McDonald (1993); Bellier (1995, 2000a, 2000b, 2002, 2005); Bellier and Wilson (2000a, 2000b); McDonald (2002, 2012); Shore (1996, 2000, 2002, 2005, 2007); Shore and Black (1994); Stevens and Stevens (2001); with focus on top Commission officials: Hooghe (2001, 2005); Page (1997); specifically, on British EU civil servants Cailliez (2004).

and on EU officials date back to the time when Poland was not even a member of the European Union.

There are also a few newer relevant positions, but none of them concerns exactly the same subject in a similar manner and they are mostly non-anthropological. Semin Suvarierol (2007, 2008, 2009, 2011) examined the social networking patterns of EU Commission officials of different nationalities. However, her research did not specifically concern Poles or even duly take into account the officials from the "new" member states. Both Favell (2001a, 2003a, 2008a) and Gatti (2009) examined Brussels' expats and not specifically the staff of EU institutions.

The study of a group which is most similar is probably the research on "new" member states officials conducted by Carolyn Ban (2007, 2009, 2013) without distinction between specific nationalities. However, these studies mostly concerned the functioning of the officials in the work context and not issues related to their private life such as adaptation and socialization practices in the new cultural context.

Except for Julie Cailliez (2004), the aforementioned authors scrutinised EU civil servants as a more or less homogenous category, without taking into account the possible impact of and specificities related to their nationality. This might leave the picture incomplete. Indeed, it can be expected that some specifically national characteristics of EU officials or their lifestyles might affect the process of integration and their perception of the new environment and hence their socialization in Brussels. Treating all EU officials as a single group, independently of their nationalities, does not allow us properly to take stock of linguistic, geographic, or cultural considerations, or to fully take into account the perception and self-perception of different groups of EU officials in Belgium. Such specificities could become apparent notably thanks to comparing characteristics of EU officials of a specific nationality with those of EU officials in general and interpreting possible deviations.

Furthermore, my research also concerns the identification patterns of Polish EU officials in the context of moving abroad and employment in EU institutions. No specific study on this issue has ever been performed.

There are also some works conducted on the previous migration of Poles to Belgium (see e.g., Siewiera 1995; Grzymała-Kazłowska 2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2005; Goddeeris 2005; Galent, Goddeeris and Niedźwiecki 2009; Kuźma 2010, 2012-2013, 2013; Leman 1997, 2000; Paspalanova 2006; Lambrecht 2007; Levrau, Piqueray, Goddeeris, and Timmerman 2014), but these do not specifically concern highly skilled white-collar migrants.

1.3. Setting the context

Among the aspects relevant for my study, the most important are the Polish origin of the research participants, that they work in EU institutions, and that they live in Brussels. Before presenting the theoretical framework and the results of the research, it is worth explaining the context in which my research participants have evolved.

1.3.1. Poles in Belgium

Polish people living in Belgium originate in several migratory movements. As Idesbald Goddeeris observes, the Polish population in Belgium (*Polonia*) has consisted of different generations, different social classes, and come from different regions of Poland (2005:11).[6] In addition to the most visible group of economic migrants from the North-Eastern part of Poland, there are also political refugees from communist Poland, as well as more recent groups, such as the staff of EU institutions and employees of EU-matters-related organizations and undertakings, notably NGOs, law firms, lobbyists, diplomatic representations of various levels, but also students and researchers.

The collapse of the communist regime in Poland enabled an important migration of

[6] See Goddeeris (2005) for a more in-depth description and analysis.

Poles to the West, notably including short-term pendular migrants[7] (Okólski 2006:11; see also Siewiera 1995:73-74; Spohn and Triandafyllidou 2003:12; Morokvasic 2004:8, 19), defined by Marek Okólski as "incomplete migration" (1997:9-10; see also Okólski 2012).

According to Johan Leman, at the beginning of 1996, the number of Poles in Brussels, as estimated based on the data of the Polish Catholic Mission, amounted to 15.000 persons (1997:28). Aleksandra Grzymała-Kazłowska estimates that the number of Poles living in Belgium reached 30.000-50.000 in the late 1990s (2005:676), while Elżbieta Kuźma claims that today this number has risen to between 100.000 and 120.000 (2013:21).

At the beginning of the century, the migrants coming from North-East Poland (and typically the region of *Podlasie*), mostly rural, traditionalist areas with scarce job opportunities, constituted the majority of the Poles working in Belgium (Grzymała-Kazłowska 2001b:6-7).[8] In many cases these people had poor job qualifications[9] and little knowledge of the local languages and consequently performed simple, manual jobs on the "black market"[10] (Grzymała-Kazłowska 2001b:8; see also Siewiera 1995:80). They usually maintained strong ties across borders (Siewiera 1995:99). Most often they settled in the poor districts of Brussels (Siewiera 1995:95), such as Saint-Gilles, Schaerbeek, Anderlecht or Saint-Josse-ten-Noode (Grzymała-Kazłowska 2001b:15). Several authors emphasize the role of the Polish Catholic Church[11] for the undocumented Polish migrants living in Belgium (see e.g., Leman 1997; Siewiera 1995; Grzymała-Kazłowska 2001b, 2005; Paspalanova 2006; Kuźma 2010; Lambrecht 2007).

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[7] Also called "international circular labour mobility" (Okólski 2012:23).

[8] Nevertheless, there were also quite numerous migrant groups from other regions in Poland, such as Lubelskie, Silesia, and Pomerania (Pomorze) (Grzymała-Kazłowska 2001b:7; 2005:679).

[9] As to the rest, Leman points to "very diverse employment backgrounds" including such professions as: "seamstresses, domestic helps, hairdressers, clerks, nurses, teachers and factory workers" for women, and "farmers, mechanics, masons, painters, carpenters and plumbers" for men (1997:29; see also Siewiera 1995:80).

[10] They overtook a certain niche in the Belgian informal labour market, notably cleaning works and the construction and renovation sector (Grzymała-Kazłowska 2001b:15; see also Kuźma 2013:32), but also "health care and seasonal work in agriculture" (Kuźma 2013:32).

[11] Grzymała-Kazłowska mentions two "so-called 'Polish churches'" in Brussels: *Notre Dame de la Chapelle* and *St. Elisabeth* in Schaerbeek (2005:684; see also Siewiera 1995:100).

The accession of Poland to the European Union in 2004 has triggered a completely new wave of Polish "movers" to Belgium involving highly qualified, educated individuals[12] such as: "doctors, engineers, IT specialists, business experts, etc." (Galent, Goddeeris and Niedźwiecki 2009:25). According to Galent et al., in contrast to the previous waves of Poles migrating in the pre-accession time, the mobility of these more recent movers is no longer motivated by the urge to escape poverty, but rather by pull factors, such as opportunities for professional development and attractive salaries (Galent et al. 2009:25).

However, the focus of my research is limited to only a small part of the wider category of Polish professionals in Belgium, the Polish EU officials who appeared only in 2003 with the first auxiliary agents and grew to a more important number after Poland's accession.

According to the data available from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, in 2013 there were 2352 Poles employed in EU institutions (1440 in the EU Commission out of which 1087 were employed on a permanent basis; 395 in the EU Parliament of which 198 were permanent), while 327 persons were employed in EU agencies (MSW, 2013). Although this number also includes those employed in Luxembourg, the majority lived and worked in Brussels.[13]

This new "wave" of Polish employees of EU institutions can be labelled "'elite' migrants" (Favell 2003b).

1.3.2. EU officials as elites

As George E. Marcus suggests, in the most general sense, "in the social sciences, *elite* has remained a flexible cover term that refers to rich, powerful, and privileged in any society,

[12] Seppe Lambrecht (2007) calls part of them "the institutional migrants" including such categories as EU officials, diplomats, and employees of multinational companies.

[13] As the data from the new study "Brussels-Europe, the figures" shows, approximately 40,000 officials are employed in EU institutions (including *stagaires*) in the Brussels Capital Region (2016:30) (the data concerned end 2014 and 2015). See: https://visit.brussels/binaries/content/assets/pdf/figures_en_1.pdf.

past or present, Western or non-Western" (Marcus 1983:3). Various authors when defining elites have emphasized the element of power and command in a society or in a certain field (Marcus 1983; Salverda and Abbink 2013; Schijf 2013; Scott 2008:32). Abner Cohen defines an elite as, "a collectivity of persons who occupy commanding positions in some important sphere of social life, and who share a variety of interests arising from similarities of training, experience, public duties, and way of life" (1981:xvi).

Do EU civil servants see themselves as elites? As my previous research (Rozanska 2009) has shown, they mostly do not. However, they seem to be aware that they are sometimes depicted as such in the media, and thus it may affect their self-perception.

As Favell, Feldblum, and Smith point out, "higher-end migrants" are usually referred to as "elites", in contrast to "disadvantaged, lower class" migration (2007:16). Anne-Mieke Fechter explains that this qualification is usually based on their high income and elevated social status, but also on their "educational achievement and professional excellence" (2007b:163-164). Favell et al. observe that this, in many cases, might be a misnomer or exaggeration when assessed in the context of the social reality of their country of origin, where they may not come from an elitist background or be particularly successful (Favell et al. 2007:17; see also Favell 2001a:32). Vered Amit also reminds us that "privilege is relative" and the term "elites" should be interpreted depending on "particular social and political contexts" (2007:1).

In this respect, it is important to make clear how the notion of "elites" is understood in the context of the present study and what exactly it implies. Favell et al. (2007) attach a lot of importance to the position of expatriates in their society of origin prior to expatriation. However, it is difficult to see why this measure should be applied to EU officials whose "expatriation" is not necessarily temporary. The approach of Favell et al. appears inadequate as applied to EU officials, since, independently of the status they would have had in their

countries, they changed it precisely by coming to Brussels and taking a position in the EU institutions.

Elites are also referred to as groups holding social or cultural capital and thus having strong influence on societies (Shore 2002:4; Harvey 2011:433). These qualities can be roughly ascribed to at least certain members of my research group (even if most of them do not hold management positions, they may often still exercise significant influence on issues of big importance for Europeans just in expert positions). Importantly for this dissertation, John Scott makes the distinction between four "ideal types of elites", notably, "coercive", "inducing", "commanding" and "expert" (Scott 2008:32-33). EU officials seem to belong to the last category. According to Scott,

> Expert elites are those whose specialized bodies of technical knowledge are organized into 'professional' structures and practices. Lawyers, accountants, doctors, and investment advisers, for example, may all be involved in persuasive power on the basis of a claimed and accepted expertise. (2008:33).

Even if the author is clearly thinking instead of professional orders, EU institutions are also perceived as centres of expertise in EU-related matters. "Commanding elites", says Scott,

> are those who legitimately occupy the top administrative positions in institutional hierarchies of management and control. In contemporary societies this characteristically takes the form of what Weber described as bureaucracy. Such 'top' bureaucratic positions are institutionally defined as those that carry strategic significance for a particular organization or form of association. (Scott 2008:33)

In the context of EU institutions, the meaning of "top positions" should be assessed in the context of functional relations between EU institutions and national administrations (specifically, their role in the implementation or coordination of policies).

Ban also suggests that the difficulty of accessing positions in EU institutions, and notably the harshness of the competitive exam, contribute to the development of an elite

feeling among EPSO "laureates",[14] and strengthens a "sense of belonging to a very special elite, a value system that permeates the organizational culture" (2013:37).

Furthermore, this laboriously achieved position comes with certain professional imperatives related to a certain vision of Europe and of the role of EU institutions and brings a number of privileges, the image of which is further exaggerated in society at large. As a result, they share the same interests and objectives and they defend them vis-à-vis other groups.[15] As Ban concludes, EU officials "in several senses" belong to an elite (2013:37). Notably, she claims that they usually originate from "elite backgrounds in terms of social class and education", earn high salaries and benefits, enjoy life-long employment, and perceive themselves as "belonging to a distinct elite group" (Ban 2013:37-38).

These arguments hold even though, during my previous study (Rozanska 2009), my research participants, confronted with the question on their understanding of this notion (often associated with them in the media),[16] tended to deconstruct the myth of Eurocrats referred to by journalists as the "European elite", for example calling it "a profession like any other".[17] Indeed, as suggested by George Marcus (1983:9), "'elite' is a term of reference, rather than of self-reference" (as cited in Shore 2002:3).

It should be kept in mind that one of the reasons why I am reflecting on this issue at the outset is the specific character of any research performed on elites. This is relevant especially as concerns the facility of access, the attitude of participants to the researcher, as well as, more generally, the power relations structuring the relationship between researcher and researched. For this reason, one needs to note certain objective factors such as low availability due to long working hours, difficult access resulting from their relative isolation,

[14] An "EPSO laureate" is a person who has successfully passed the competition and been put on a "reserve list" of candidates for recruitment.
[15] Shore explains that "in order to constitute itself as an elite in the first place an elite group must develop its own particularistic set of interests, norms and practices to differentiate itself from the masses" (2002:2-3).
[16] See e.g., Calay and Magosse (2008).
[17] Amongst the factors indicating the elite status of Eurocrats some of my respondents emphasized: "a position of power", "a lot of influence" or "good pay" (Rozanska 2009).

and high consciousness of members of the researched group of their image in society together with a clear interest in influencing it. From this perspective, even irrespective of the actual power held by my interviewees, the challenges in performing research on them are the same as those ascribed to elites in the literature.

1.3.3. The EU institutions and their staff

Most EU officials in Brussels work in the European Commission, the Council of the EU, or the European Parliament, with smaller numbers employed in the Committee of the Regions or the Economic and Social Committee. They are all subject to the same Staff Regulations and have the same obligations, rights, and privileges depending on their grade and staff category. The great majority of my research participants were employed in the Commission, a few worked in the Parliament.

According to Cris Shore,

> Despite the popular stereotypes about a vast organisation run by an army of anonymous bureaucrats, the Commission's day-to-day running is done by a small … staff of administrators, experts, translators, interpreters and secretaries, numbering some 20 000 … . This small size has led to a common "insider's" view of the Commission as a compact, efficient, dynamic organisation. (2007:192)

The European Commission, is organised into several Directorates-General and services (such as the Legal Service) the number and organisation of which varies frequently, as it is often re-shuffled following the attribution of portfolios to Commissioners. The structure of the Parliament is broadly similar.

The EU staff, following the French administrative model, are "organised hierarchically according to grade and function" (Shore 2000:182). At the top of the hierarchy are AD-grade[18] (former A-grade) officials who constitute the "administrative elite" and are "responsible for formulation and management policy" (Shore 2000:183). Shore points at "the high intellectual and professional calibre of the A-grade staff" (2000:189), who "frequently

[18] A-grade has been replaced by AD grade following the administrative reform in 2004.

hail from the most prestigious institutions [of education] of their home countries" (Shore 2000:189). The previous B-grade and C-grade officials, regrouped under the AST category are "technicians, administrators and record keepers", as well as "secretaries, clerics officers, typists and support staff" (Shore 2000:184).

AD and AST are the categories of staff, with each of them further sub-divided into grades depending on seniority and (to a lesser extent) merit. As Shore emphasizes, "the normal career path for most officials ends at the [former] A4 rank, the higher posts being political appointments and not subject to the normal statutory provisions" (2000:186). "Among all grades", says Shore, "posts are filled irrespective of nationality" (2007:190). However, as Ban claims, care is taken so as to ensure that "the staff reflect the population of Europe ... also within individual DGs and directorates" (2013:32).

Moreover, another important division line in the EU Commission is the one between the permanent statutory officials, appointed "for life", and different categories of temporary staff, ranging from the quickly expanding category of Contract Agents (with significantly lower salaries) to the faltering category of Temporary Officials (subject to the same rules under the Staff Regulation as permanent officials, but employed for a fixed-term contract). Only the permanent officials are recruited via *concours*. Moreover, there are also seconded national experts and the cabinet staff which are considered political positions and recruited accordingly.

1.3.4. The heterogeneous culture of the European Commission

Several authors argue that the European Commission, culturally speaking, is much less homogeneous than the outside world seems to think (e.g., N. Nugent 2002:1-2; McDonald 2012:541). Most of the existing literature on the EU institutions concerns the European

Commission.[19] However, as was mentioned before, the EU officials in other institutions are subject to the same Staff Regulation, the administrative structures are broadly similar, and officials can move to another institution without major problems. Also, based on my study (the majority of my research participants work in the Commission, but a few worked in other institutions, and several changed their institution during or prior to the research), it seems that the situation of the staff in all institutions is rather similar (with one interviewee clearly mentioning a difference). For this reason, the findings concerning the Commission can be extrapolated to EU institutions in general.

As Suvarierol observes, "the Commission presents a microcosm of Europe in terms of the diversity of cultural backgrounds, values, attitudes and languages" (2011:186). In fact, the European Commission's organisational culture is praised by the EU staff for its "'multilingual' and 'multinational' character" (Shore 2000:153). On the other hand, Edward C. Page argues that this multinational character "create[s] distinctive linguistic barriers to communication within EU organizations" (1997:41).

Abélès, Bellier, and McDonald claim that the "cultural cohesion" of the Commission is not perfect, as "it also generates strong centrifugal tendencies" (1993:5). Neill Nugent draws attention to "many elements and interests" present in the institution behind its uniform appearance (2002:2). For instance, several other authors point at the division between the North and the South,[20] in terms of "symbolic geography" (Ban 2013:40; see also Abélès 2004:18; Abélès et al. 1993:41; McDonald 2002:66; 2012:541; Suvarierol 2007:88).[21]

[19] With the exceptions of some works by Abélès (1992), Scully (2005), Busby (2011, 2013), and Busby and Belkacem (2013). However, some of the works of Busby concern assistants, who are outside the scope of this study.

[20] During informal conversations, my research participants referred to much more specific cultural stereotypes being explored by their colleagues, such as mentions of someone being "very German" (usually referring to their lack of flexibility) or "typically French" (referring to a strong sense and fear of hierarchy or to the use of excessively complex and abstract mental constructions).

[21] As McDonald argues, "the attribution of 'north/south' changes contextually, but the countries generally in the north are Britain, Ireland, Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg, sometimes Belgium (and since their accession Sweden, Finland and Austria); those in the south are France, Spain, Italy, Greece, Portugal and, on certain points, Belgium" (McDonald 2002:66; see also Abélès et al. 1993:41).

Maryon McDonald adds that, following the 2004 enlargement, this dichotomy is sometimes complemented with the West *versus* East distinction (2012:541).

As Abélès et al. observe, the diversity of cultures within the EU institutions may provoke certain direct inconveniences (1993:49). As the scholars explain, "perceptions of what constitutes good manners change from one cultural world to another, and the mere fact of sharing a workplace is not seen to be enough to establish sociable relations between individuals brought up in different cultural registers" (Abélès et al. 1993:50). It is suggested that misunderstandings and conflicts at work are sometimes interpreted via the prism of cultural differences and the blame is sometimes put on a colleague's cultural background (Abélès et al. 1993:51). McDonald even states that, despite positive accounts directed to the outsiders, "there were also complaints and tears behind closed doors internally, accompanied by manifest worry, anger, stress and illness" (2012:549). Marc Abélès stresses that culture is contextual and requires a clear point of reference (2004:15; Abélès et al. 1993:40). The Commission, claims the author, "constructs itself in relation to the outside worlds of clients and experts, member states and members of the European Parliament" (Abélès 2004:15).

Shore reports that on a daily basis EU officials "flit between languages, depending on who has just joined or left the group" (2000:188; see also Bellier 1995:56). At the same time, such communication cannot duly take account of certain cultural aspects related to the use of registers, contexts, and so forth. As a result, "miscommunications do occur," states Suvarierol (2011:188; see also Abélès et al. 1993:32).

While drawing on her earlier work, Irène Bellier reports that the officials coined, in the process of social and cultural integration, a specific, artificial jargon, "'*Franglais* or Frenglish'", a hybrid of French and English (2002:82; 1995:56; see also Abélès et al. 1993:32; Abélès and Bellier 1996:440; Bellier 2000a:154; 2000b:66; 2005:12; McDonald

2002:58; Shore 2000:188-189; Shore and Black 1994:292).[22] Some authors report that Eurospeak is sometimes difficult to translate and understand for a person from the outside world (Bellier 2000a:154; Abélès et al. 1993:33). Bellier even claims that this jargon, while isolating the speakers from the outside world (2005:14), constitutes an "expression of a unity" of the EU officials (2000a:154).

1.3.5. Recruitment of EU civil servants

Abélès et al., as well as Bellier, emphasize that the decision to work for the EU in the early, pioneer phase of European integration was usually driven by idealistic motives related to the ideas that paved the way for the creation of the European Communities (Abélès et al. 1993:16; Bellier 2002:88). However, the reasons for which people joined the institutions have changed and "material attraction became important: the high salary and stable employment drew young graduates to Brussels" (Abélès et al. 1993:17; see also Bellier 2002:88-89; Shore 2000:140).

EU officials are recruited by the institutions and "not seconded by national governments" (Shore 2000:139). Since the early stages of its construction, the European Communities have adopted a selective examination for entry into its service so as to secure high quality staff (Ban 2013:37; Bellier 2002:85; see also Shore 2000:191-192). Even if the majority of the staff is recruited after a competition (*concours*), Shore claims it is possible "to bypass the system" (2000:196-197). The competitions have been very difficult to pass, requiring in-depth knowledge of European Communities (and subsequently – Union) matters. Those who passed the two-part examination are on the "reserve list". Although Shore insists that, "only half those who pass their exams and get on to the reserve list eventually find a job" (2000:190-191), this ratio actually varies from one competition to another.

[22] This peculiar vernacular is characterised by mixed semantics, but also frequent use of the syntax of one language while speaking the other (McDonald 2002:58; Abélès et al. 1993:32).

The oral exam allows the overall profile of the person to be verified. Individuals communicating in several languages, with international experience, and without excessively nationalistic positions are more likely to integrate and thus have better chances of being selected (Ban 2013:33).

Shore maintains that, in addition to familiarity with EU procedures, policies, and discourse, personal contacts also play a role in obtaining a job in the EU (2000:152). Both Shore and Abélès et al. emphasize that the career often starts in the College of Europe or with a *stage* in the institutions (Shore 2000:152; Abélès et al. 1993:16; see also Suvarierol 2011:190). This experience allegedly facilitates the development of an allegiance to European ideals, but also sets up useful contacts (Shore 2000:152; Abélès et al. 1993:16) and "lays the foundations of a multinational Brussels network for many prospective EU officials" (Suvarierol 2009:421).

1.3.6. EU officials from new member states: similar or different?

Ban argues that, following the 2004 enlargement (as well as, to a lesser extent, after all previous enlargements), there has been a "'we-they' split" (2013:35) between the old and the new officials as the Central and Eastern European countries allegedly differed in terms of culture, economic development, and "recent political experience" (Ban 2013:2).

Although the reasons quoted by Ban are debatable (the democratic experience of Greece, Spain, and Portugal was similarly short, or even shorter at the moment of their accession, and the cultural distance of Orthodox Greeks might be seen as even greater), it cannot be excluded that former Communist Bloc countries could indeed be seen by their Western colleagues as culturally distant and unfamiliar. In the same vein, while referring, more generally, to Poland's accession to the EU, Piotr Sztompka comments that, despite being inside, newcomers may still, initially, be treated as strangers by the incumbents and

might not immediately feel "at home" (2004:482). However, particularly given the working patterns which involve intensive contacts with other officials as well as, presumably, the above-average inter-cultural skills of EU staff, it would be very odd if any excessively stereotyped perception could extend beyond the first months of working together.

Ban draws attention to important commonalities between the nationals of the new member states, such as some shared "post-transition challenges", a complex of being the periphery, and a fear of discrimination (2013:52). The perceptions of Westerners reflected these complexes and also had consequences for the perception of the EU officials from the new member states. Notably, Ban observes that there was quite a strong stereotype as regards their predominantly financial motivation for working in the EU institutions, originating in the assumption that the salary offered would be particularly attractive for nationals of these poor and underdeveloped countries (2013:160-161). In reality, according to the survey by the European Commission referred to by Ban and Vandenabeele (2009), the motivations of officials from "old" member states and those from new member states proved to be broadly similar (Ban 2013:161).

1.3.7. "Eurocrats": who they are

EU officials are popularly referred to as "Eurocrats", a portmanteau of "European" and "bureaucrat" (Bellier 2002:84; see also Abélès and Bellier 1996:438). It has become pejorative (Bellier 2000a:149; Bellier and Wilson 2000a:17) and now serves to emphasize the "technocratic dimension of the European construction" (Bellier 2002:84). However, in my thesis, I use this term in a neutral and purely descriptive sense.

Conventionally, EU officials have a reputation of being "the most privileged public

officials in the world" (Shore 2000:193; see also Calay and Magosse 2008:481).[23] They are exempted from national income tax and only need to pay a tax to the Union budget, deducted directly from their salaries. Various authors (e.g., Shore 2000:193-194; Bellier 2002:88) refer to their relatively high salaries, allowances, and other privileges (even if these have been substantially reduced over the last decades, especially after the so-called Kinnock reform came into force in 2004). They even repeat certain urban legends, such as the alleged right to purchase cigarettes on discount or about the Christmas gifts they would receive from their organization (Bellier 2002:88). Bellier sees in these privileges the origin of the changing motivations of officials to join the EU institutions (2002:88).

On the other hand, the scholar also draws attention to the fact that despite the comfort of living, high pension, and other benefits, very often EU civil servants suffer from homesickness, especially those who live a longer distance from home and cannot (or find it impractical to) go back for a weekend to their country of origin (2002:86). Some of them resign and come back to their countries once they get an interesting job offer there (Bellier 2002:85). As Bellier observes, EU civil servants are often confronted with criticism (2002:84). Most often they are blamed for being disconnected both from the national and the local realities (Bellier 2002:84; see also Shore 2000:168; Abélès 2000:45).

1.3.8. Brussels

The pluricultural character of Brussels influences, according to many authors (*infra*), the manner in which at least certain types of new settlers, including EU officials, integrate, as well as the "target" of this integration. On the other hand, the character of Brussels is also partly determined by the presence of the EU institutions.

[23] Shore (2000) does not specify who exactly is of this opinion, while Calay and Magosse (2008) refer to local media reports. However, myself, I have heard this opinion on numerous occasions both in Belgium and in Poland.

1.3.8.1. The multifaceted and pluricultural character of Brussels

The international character of Brussels is strongly related to its status of the seat of the EU institutions and of other international institutions (notably NATO) (Corijn, Vandermotten, Decroly, and Swyngedouw 2009:1). Shore refers to Brussels as "the heart of Europe" (2000:154), Bellier adds that the name of the city has become "a metonymy for the European Union" (2002:78; 2000b:59), while Favell even claims that Brussels is identified not only with the European Union, but actually with Europe (2008a:46).

By contrast, Vincent Calay and Reinoud Magosse suggest that since the 1990s Brussels has been seen as "a cosmopolitan and multicultural city" not only in relation to its status as the capital of the European Union (2008:483; see also Genard et al. 2009:1-2; Favell 2008a:48). Today, out of a total population of 1.175.173 of the Brussels-Capital Region, the number of foreigners amounts to 398.726 according to the figures from July 2015 from the Brussels Institute for Statistics and Analysis (BISA).[24] As Favell observes, Brussels is a unique hybrid, home to successive waves of immigration composed of skilled professionals of various nationalities, including EU officials and corporate "expats", but also of "guest workers" (from Spain, Portugal, Italy), and "colonial migrants" (from Congo, North Africa, or Turkey), and refugees (Favell 2008a:47-48; 196).

According to Corijn et al., out of the group of over 110.000 people who settled in Brussels "because of its international function", most are "relatively isolated and politically inactive" (2009:5). The authors suggest that the "European construction must assume more directly its responsibilities towards its capital", but also that measures must be taken to integrate EU officials politically and in cultural and educational terms (Corijn et al. 2009:9). However, Favell explains the low participation in Belgian local elections by the persistent rooting of expats in their home countries or in Europe, and by the risk of being fined for

[24] See: http://www.statistics.irisnet.be/themes/population/population#.VzxT7FcTl0.

abstention once registered as a voter (Favell 2010:201). Moreover, Favell claims that Belgian politics revolves around issues which are not of primary importance to foreigners (2010:207-208). This statement needs to be nuanced. Local politics, concerning discussions about major infrastructural projects, such as the future of Brussels tunnels, the extension of the metro or tramway network, or the controversial establishment of the pedestrian zone in the centre of Brussels, relate to issues affecting the EU officials' everyday life. Other, especially linguistic, issues (such as the famous Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde conflict) are, indeed, of a marginal interest for all those who are not Belgian nationals. At the same time, Favell draws attention to other forms of political involvement (2010:210). He claims that they "express their political opinions through their activism as consumers, and the kinds of choices they make about their lifestyles and culture in the city" (Favell 2010:210).

As Calay and Magosse remark, Brussels is pictured rather pejoratively in the international press as "the face of the 'European Moloch'" (2008:480). The international character of the city does not obscure another, less positive image. Brussels is subject to divergent and differently valued judgments: it can be referred to either as a wasteful "cesspit of poverty and poor management" and a dangerous and dirty city, or alternatively as "a powerful centre of economics and decision making", the attractive main metropolis of Belgium, an "international centre of politics, as the capital of Europe, and even as post-national cosmopolitan city" (Loeckx et al. 2012:6). As we will see, these imaginaries have also influenced the expectations of freshly arrived Polish EU officials.

1.3.8.2. The impact of the EU institutions on Brussels

The subject of my research is a group of fifty Polish EU civil servants and not the economic impact of the EU institutions on Brussels. It is possible not to discuss such economic aspects and to present the research group "in a vacuum". However, I prefer to refer to the existing

literature which provides the economic context of my research group's impact on the city they inhabit. This literature is obviously incomplete, since, for example, it does not exhaustively discuss the social-economic situation of all the inhabitants of Brussels. However, it gives an idea of different views on this subject, based on the scientific literature.

Calay and Magosse observe that there is a multitude of approaches to and intense debates about the role of the EU institutions in the city (2008:473). Jan Degadt mentions "large flows of money" due to their presence, spent predominantly within the Brussels Capital Region, "creating incomes, jobs and prosperity" (2008:232; see also Corijn, Macharis, Jans, and Huysseune 2008:1). Likewise, Shore suggests, the location of the EU institutions in Brussels has brought many economic benefits and employment opportunities (2000:157).[25] In fact, 85 percent of EU officials' salaries is spent in Brussels (Favell 2001a:42). Bellier adds that their presence not only significantly improved the local economy while creating "thousands of jobs", but has also enabled the development of "services linked to tourist sectors" (2002:78; see also Calay and Magosse 2008:482).[26] Favell emphasises the positive impact of Europeans, both EU officials and "expats", on the real estate market (2001a:42). Finally, Degadt suggests that the development of public transport in the city is also due to efforts of the Federal and Regional governments to attract EU and international institutions (2008:232).

However, other consequences of the EU institutions' presence in the city are perceived in a rather negative light. First of all, it is seen as the main reason for the destruction of many residential quarters, replaced by new offices (Bellier 2002:78; see also

[25] As the data in the recent study "Brussels-Europe, The Figures" (2016) has shown, an extra 40,000 jobs in Brussels were created indirectly thanks to the presence of international organisations – in lobbying, journalism, regional representation, and other services like event organisation, hotels, and catering (representing 16.7% of total employment in Brussels).

[26] Calay and Magosse stress the EU institutions' impact on the tourism economy of Brussels (2008:482). It is also thanks to them that Brussels has developed its entertainment services, such as shops, restaurants, and cafés that undoubtedly help to improve its economy (Favell 2001a:42).

Shore 2000:157; Calay and Magosse 2008:486).[27] Favell deplores the demolition of numerous beautiful Art Deco buildings, especially in the new Schuman quarter, to free space for the construction of EU headquarters (2008a:48). Shore repeats a very frequent claim that the growth of the EU institutions triggered higher house prices in the city (2000:161; see also De Groof 2008:25; Calay and Magosse 2008:486), which has led to "the creation of residential enclaves or 'ghettos' of rich diplomats, Eurocrats and foreign businessmen" (Shore 2000:161; see also Corijn et al. 2008:1).

However, Nicolas Bernard (2008) challenges the common assumption which attributes the rise of real estate prices mostly to EU officials, predominantly blaming local real-estate market players for artificially increasing prices (2008:278). Calay and Magosse suggest the imaginary Euro-Brussels is concentrated around the stereotypically presented European quarter and the European civil servants (2008:480). As they argue, the image of EU institutions has been created by the media coining imaginaries which are at the origin of the hostility towards them (2008:480). Due to the imaginaries present in the mass media, the EU is perceived as technocratic, undemocratic, and wasteful (Calay and Magosse 2008:480). EU officials are the main protagonists of the mediatised narratives on the "Brussels bureaucrats" and "the failed integration of the European Quarter's in Brussels", they are associated with secrecy, corruption, and money wasting and perceived as elitist, unrealistic, and uprooted (Calay and Magosse 2008:480-481).

[27] Also, Shore observes that the presence of EU institutions has devastated the "infrastructure and architecture of the city", while destroying and replacing 19th century houses with "high rise monuments of glass and concrete" without any planning, contributing to a "dramatic increase in traffic and pollution" (2000:157). In opposition to the simplistic, common view of the impact of Eurocrats on the spatial shape of the city, Annette Kuhk notes following Demey (2007) that even though the erection of the Berlaymont in the 1960s is considered a milestone in turning the housing area into a concrete office desert, the phenomenon of migration outside the centre had already started at the beginning of the past century, when 30% of the population fled to the suburbs, attracted by a better lifestyle there (Kuhk 2008:504).

Chapter 2. Theoretical framework

My research allowed me to gather substantial number of accounts concerning the lifestyle, social relations, and identifications of my research group. Although my intention was to adopt a mainly emic perspective by permitting my research participants to express themselves using terms and elaborating on subjects of their choice, there are nevertheless limits to such an approach. First of all, I needed to formulate questions. These questions, although formulated in plain language and based on the categories used by my respondents (i.e. adaptation, integration, etc.), were necessarily conceived with a certain theoretical framework in mind and influenced by the existing literature on the subject and my previous research. Before describing the relations between my research group and other groups in Brussels, I need to name and define certain categories I will be using to analyse the material gathered such as, for instance, "community", "boundaries", "ethnicity", "identity", and "identification", etc.

2.1. Community and criteria of exclusion and inclusion

Before examining the social and cultural integration of a group in a society, thus relations between individuals of a group and another group or groups, it is only natural to reflect on the relations inside the group and its actual scope. Hence the usefulness of referring to the concept of a community. Furthermore, while reflecting on who and why actually belongs to the community and how the community is delimited, reference to the concept of boundaries appears indispensable. Finally, stereotypes constitute a prolific source of markers that the members of communities use to establish what is inside and outside the boundaries. I will need these concepts to describe the "building blocks" (constituted by the researched groups and the host environment) for subsequect reflection on integration. For this reason, it seems justified to introduce these concepts together, from the start.

2.1.1. The concept of community

As Nigel Rapport and Joanna Overing explain, in anthropology, "'community' is to be characterized in terms of: (i) common interests between people; or (ii) a common ecology and locality; or (iii) a common social system or structure" (2005:61). In socio-cultural anthropology, Amit defines a community "as a convergence of place, people, identity and culture" (2002a:15). By contrast, Warner describes a community in more functional, dynamic terms by focusing on interaction between interdependent individuals within social organization (1941:785-786).

The definitions of "community" are, roughly, based on different criteria referring to the relations between individuals. These relations may be described in static terms of sharing (A.P. Cohen 2002:169), being identical or being different from individuals from outside the community, or in more dynamic terms of functioning as a whole. "Community", as used in the present dissertation refers to commonalities of interests, perceptions, and situations, but also to the feeling of belonging which is at the origin of group institutions (e.g., ritual gatherings, specific channels of interaction) and solidarities.

2.1.1.1. Community as a relational and symbolic construct

Several scholars emphasize the relational but also oppositional character of the concept of community (A.P. Cohen 1985: 12, 58; Barth 1998 [1969]; see also Amit 2002a:45). In this context, and similarly to Barth (1998) [1969], they put emphasis on the notion of boundaries (A.P. Cohen 1985:69; Amit 2002a:45). As Anthony P. Cohen explains, boundaries delimiting communities are constructed symbolically and "mark the community *in relation to* other communities" (1985:58, emphasis in original). Although they are constructed around "elements which may, for certain purposes and in certain respects, be considered to be more like each other", importantly, they also "mark off these elements from those which differ"

(A.P. Cohen 1985:14). Cohen perceives a "community" primarily as a symbolically constructed cultural creation (1985:38) and considers boundaries to symbolize the community, their perception being the essence of the community's consciousness (A.P. Cohen 1985:74, 14). He states that boundaries may also remain "in the minds of their beholders" (1985:12). In this case, their perception both within and across the boundaries of a community may be different (A.P. Cohen 1985:12). Cohen stresses that the meanings of boundaries for different persons do not need to be the same (1985:13) since the crucial aspect remains "common ownership of symbols" (1985:21). Consequently, he perceives community not so much in terms of a social structure or social behaviour as of "thinking" in a particular manner, and thus as something symbolic (1985:98).

Despite their importance, boundaries are not always considered sufficient to forge a collective identity which might be constitutive of a community. Notably, Richard Jenkins points out that group identification requires a minimal degree of similarity among members (2008b:132). He concludes that "without some commonality there can be no collectivity" (Jenkins 2008b:132). Likewise, Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson insist that "be[ing] part of a community" implies also being "similar to others within the community in some crucial respects" (1997:17).

Cohen (1985) understands "membership" as a "*sense* of belonging" which is shared among the members of a community as a result of shared culture, defined as adherence to "a common symbolic world" (Jenkins 2002:118). The aforementioned "sense of belonging" results from a feeling of similarity (Jenkins 2002:118).

2.1.1.2. From geographically delineated community to community in mind

As indicated by several scholars, communities were originally studied with a focus on location, a "physical place" (Blackshaw and Woodhouse 2010:64; Amit 2002a:42; Berg

2001:233; Wellman 1999:xiv), a bounded territory. This approach belongs to the past. For instance, Barry Wellman proposes that we should see community rather as "a preeminently *social* phenomenon", a social network (1999:xiv). As mentioned, Anthony P. Cohen considered that "community exists in the minds of its members" (1985:98).

Benedict Anderson argues that nearly all communities (perhaps except those among people in direct visual contact with each other) are imagined and therefore that differences between them only concern "the style in which they are imagined" (1996 [1991]:6). However, the imagined character of the community does not necessarily prevent it from being considered real (A.P. Cohen 2002:170). For Amit, whose approach is largely concurrent with Anderson's findings, community has become a synonym for "any form of collective cultural consciousness" (2002b:6). In her view, what is imagined must necessarily be associated with its social realization (Amit 2002b:8). The crucial element of any community are emotions, empathy, and the feeling of closeness between its members (Amit 2002b:18). These things, in Amit's view, require "shared experiences, activities, places and/or histories" (2002b:18). As Amit puts it very relevantly to the research at hand:

> the members of a workforce are not likely to feel that they are members of a community if their relationship is based exclusively on their formal roles within the organization that employs them. If, on the other hand, they are able to extend this association into a more extended, voluntary sociability (lunch conversations, socializing after work, gossip, etc.) then they may well feel that they, or at least some of them, form a community. (2002a:58)

One might add that the colleagues are even more likely to form a community if they are all foreigners in the society in which they live and work, are subject to seclusion and stereotypisation and are working on the realisation of the objectives determined in line with a common ideology which is not necessarily shared by other people.

2.1.2. Boundaries

In anthropology, the concept of boundary is often attributed to Fredrik Barth's (1969) seminal monograph, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, and hence is associated with ethnicity

(A.P. Cohen 1998:26; 1994:63). According to Barth, a boundary "signifies a syndrome of ideas, ranging from an imagined line drawn on the ground, through various abstract separations and distinctions in realms of political and social organization, to a schema for conceptualizing the very idea of distinction" (2000:20). In a nutshell, Barth argues that "on the basic level of the concept, boundaries are assumed to separate what they distinguish" (2000:27). Thus, in the approach of one of the most important promoters of this concept, the definition of "boundaries" was functional, defined by their role or the direct consequence of their existence, namely "distinction" and "separation". Similarly, Christopher Tilley describes the function of boundaries as "creating distinctions and marking out social oppositions, mapping social and cultural difference and Otherness" (1994:16-17).

Some scholars have tried to answer the question of what boundaries actually are. Ira Bashkow conceives of boundaries "*as conceptual structures centered on symbolic contrasts or oppositions*" (2004:451, emphasis in original). Anthony P. Cohen calls boundaries "the subjects of claim based on a perception by at least one of the parties of certain features – diacritical features – which distinguish it from others" (1994:63; see also A.P. Cohen 1998:26). Such diacritical features may serve to define ethnic group identity, but also, for instance, "personal space" (A.P. Cohen 1994:63). According to Cohen, "boundary is essentially a matter of consciousness and of experience, rather than of fact and law" (1998:22; see also A.P. Cohen 1994:63).

In Barth's approach, boundaries could be understood as "divid[ing] territories 'on the ground'; "more abstractly, ... [as] mark[ing] social groups off from each other", but also as "provid[ing] a template for that which separates distinct categories of the mind" (2000:17). In the definition of social boundaries Hastings Donnan and Thomas M. Wilson observe that anthropologists often put emphasis on their faculty to "order social relations and mark membership in collectivities" (1999:19). They also refer to "cultural boundaries which

separate different worlds of meaning" (Donnan and Wilson 1999:19). Furthermore, they distinguish territorial boundaries that "are marked in geopolitical space" (1999:19).

Thomas Hylland Eriksen observes after Barth that the focus on the boundaries' function of separating ethnic groups from each other implies "a *relational* and *processual* approach to ethnicity", defined through "its relationship to others, highlighted through the boundary" (2010:45; see also Leman 2014:93-108). According to Barth, sharing a culture by the members of a group should be looked at rather as a consequence of the organization of an ethnic group, not as its defining feature (1998 [1969]:11). As Barth's famous statement goes, "the critical focus of investigation … becomes the ethnic *boundary* that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses" (Barth 1998 [1969]:15). Eriksen (2007) even claims that social diversity can co-exist with cultural uniformity, or vice versa. This understanding of social boundaries will be very relevant for my research when analyzing the relations between my researched group and other Poles in Brussels and with other EU officials.

Barth (2000) points out that boundaries, despite their potential to "divide and discriminate", may also "*enable the construction of* relationships" (A.P. Cohen 2000:6, emphasis in original). As Cohen explains, boundaries let the members of communities define their membership in interaction with and by contrast to what remains outside the boundary (A.P. Cohen 1985:12).

Anne-Meike Fechter refers to the case of expatriates who are "engaged in complex processes of constructing different kinds of boundaries, and a major part of their lives revolves around their negotiation and reinforcement" (2007b:26). In Leman's research group Ghequière, Stallaert, Van de Vyver, Chang, and Leman himself applied the idea of culturally manipulative social boundary construction on various immigrant and non-immigrant communities, such as the Suryoye from Turkey, Spanish regionalism, the Hungarians in

Transylvania (Romania), the Yunnanese Chinese of Northern Thailand, and immigrants in general (Leman 1998).

According to Barth, the pre-requisite for the existence of a boundary is common understanding of criteria for judgment – only then can two individuals come to the conclusion that one of them is a member of a social group and the other is not, as they both recognise and acknowledge their differences and similarities (1998 [1969]:15). The basis for this differentiation are not necessarily all the differences between them, but only those which they perceive as "significant": Barth calls them "signals and emblems of differences" (1998 [1969]:14). The choice of these emblems can be quite subjective.[28] Barth is very clear on the fact that it is the dichotomization resulting from such features – and not these features themselves – which matter (1998 [1969]:14).

Barth's notion of "signals and emblems of differences" marking the boundary was developed in theories of ethnicity by Manning Nash (1989). Nash agrees that "boundary mechanisms are cultural markers of difference" (1989:10) and elaborates on the nature of such markers: "Index features [which] must be easily seen, grasped, understood, and reacted to in social situations" (Nash 1989:10). Nash insists that the "index features", although the meanings attributed to them may vary from one group to another, must be visible also to non-members (1989:10). As Nash suggests, those boundary markers which are of primary importance for the creation of a group's identity are not always visible to non-members, and thus secondary and tertiary characteristics play the role of "index features" (1989:11). These features ("surface pointers") may evolve in time and may include in particular taboos and special medical or economic practices (Nash 1989:11-12). Cultural "index features" may be the subject of stereotyping, based on caricature and exaggeration, which is a factor contributing to the drawing and maintenance of boundaries (Nash 1989:10).

[28] Barth claims that "in some relationships radical differences are played down and denied" (1998 [1969]:14).

2.1.3. Stereotypes

According to Eriksen, in social anthropology, stereotyping is understood as the production and use of "standardised notions of the cultural distinctiveness of a group" (2010:29). He adds that the phenomenon occurs independently of the power relations between the groups within a society, both with dominated and dominating groups (Eriksen 2010:29). Drawing on Ardener (1982) and Benson (1981), Maryon McDonald (1993) points out that stereotypes occur where the cultural categories of different groups of individuals do not match. McDonald elaborates on the construction of the categorical difference at stake: it is influenced by contemporary political and social ascriptions (hence evolving in time); it appears at boundaries, not necessarily corresponding to specific cultures understood as "homogenous wholes"; it is nested in an overarching discourse attributing meanings to persons and groups "in the worlds of the representers" (McDonald 1993:228-232).[29]

As Eriksen emphasizes, stereotypes do not necessarily reflect any reality. Walter Lippmann qualifies stereotypes as "a picture of a possible world to which we are adapted" – a simplified portrait of the world, accommodating the observer's habits, preferences, perceptions and emotions. Although incomplete, this drawing is safe and familiar (Lippmann 1998 [1922]:95). It constitutes "the projection upon the world of our own sense of our own value, our own position and our own rights" (1998 [1922]:96). As Lippmann puts it, they are "the guarantee of our self-respect" (1998 [1922]:96). On the other hand, as McDonald observes, in Lippmann's approach stereotypes "meant inaccurate representations … [and] seemed to betray a lack of 'direct experience' of the people so represented" (1993:221).

As Eriksen goes on, stereotypes allow us to simplify and "order" complex social patterns in the perception of their holder and they provide us with criteria for classifications

[29] As illustration, McDonald notably explains how the British or French understanding of "masculinity" and "feminity" contributed to the construction of mutual national stereotypes and how the British perception of the German language served to define stereotypically the cultural difference from the Germans (1993:230).

or typologies of kinds of people (Eriksen 2010:29-30; see also Rapport and Overing 2005:344). They can also provide us with arguments in favour of certain privileges or of unequal access to resources, or alternatively (in the case of negative stereotyping of ruling groups) contribute to the empowerment of the dominated groups (Eriksen 2010:30). Finally, stereotypes play a pivotal role in the definition of boundaries and in the group's self-definition by contrast to the Other "by providing a tidy 'map' of the social world" (Eriksen 2010:31).

As already mentioned, Nash suggested that "index features", perceived as "boundary-marking features", determine the membership of groups and define the "minimal cultural items ... involved in membership" (1989:10). As Nash goes on to say, such index features must also be visible to non-members of the group (1989:10). The same cultural characteristics which are proudly displayed by the members of the group can appear "comic or be derided by outsiders" (1989:10). As Nash concludes, "stereotyping is a form of caricature of cultural, index features of group differentiation; an emphasis and ranking of features that in itself helps mark the boundaries among different groups" (1989:10).

As regards the role of stereotypes in the context of migration, Kay Daux observes that different groups of immigrants are valued differently by the host population depending on "group-specific stereotypes", serving as "a set of distinctive frames through which immigrants … are viewed" (2006:67). Daux claims that the abovementioned stereotypes trigger differentiated treatment and actually determine the position and experience of different groups of immigrants in the society (2006:67). The stereotypes of a migrant group will have an important impact on adaptation in a host country, but also on identification patterns. Indeed, as Mariola Janeta suggests, in addition to the individual predispositions of an immigrant to cultural change, there is also another, wider group of elements influencing the adaptation process which is related to the attitude of members of a host society

(2011:258). In addition, Jenkins claims that categorisation via stereotypes affects group identity: the categorised group internalizes stereotypical description by another group, making it a part of its own identity (1997:70).

2.1.3.1. Legacy of a stereotyped view of the Poles in Belgium

The media "have an important influence on shaping of the public opinion, including also attitude towards ethnic and national minorities" (Janeta 2011:259). Meanwhile, as Galent et al. argue, "Poles seem to have a bad reputation in Belgian media" (2009:126). In fact, as Grzymała-Kazłowska suggests, Belgians approach Poles with some fear and anxiety, as they were often pictured as protagonists in criminal scandals and scoops (2001b:37-38), while Galent et al. add to this list "low-paid jobs, illegal work, and unlawfulness" (2009:126).

However, Galent et al. also observe that the "old stereotypes are deconstructed" since Belgian employers do not perceive Poles as "lazy, traditional, religious, or criminal" (Galent et al. 2009:134). Moreover, they observe that new stereotypes, this time positive, seem to have emerged among some employers, referring to the image of "zealous, open-minded, and emancipated" people (2009:135). Nevertheless, it is suggested that "not all of the classic stereotypes have completely disappeared", as Poles are still associated with excessive drinking (Galent et al. 2009:130, 135).

Indeed, as Grzymała-Kazłowska argues: "in spite of encountering some negative national stereotypes such as associations with car theft, drunkenness, forgery and prostitution, the workers … interviewed [by her] felt needed and accepted in Belgian society" (2005:682). The group of Polish undocumented migrants researched by Grzymała-Kazłowska admitted that they did not feel discriminated against and that the attitude of Belgians toward them was either positive or neutral and often marked by sympathy and tolerance (2001b:36). Nevertheless, as Grzymała-Kazłowska emphasizes, friendship or any closer social contacts

were rather excluded (2001b:37; 2005:682) and "politeness, kindness, but also distance and reserve" were the characteristic features of Belgians' attitude toward Polish migrants (2001b:37).

As regards the Europeanness of Poles in Belgians' perception, the authors find that:

> Poland's Europeaness is not questioned, but many interviewees still point to a certain backwardness in Poland and other Eastern European countries. According to them, Poland lies behind and is only gradually catching up with Belgium and other Western countries. This primarily concerns economy. (Galent et al. 2009:144)

Likewise, Grzymała-Kazłowska emphasizes that for Belgians Poles are Europeans, although slightly different as they belong to the Slavs who were under eastern influences and shaped by the communist system (2001b:35). In her study, Poles were also associated with poverty and seen as coming from an unstable and backward country in terms of economy and technology (Grzymała-Kazłowska 2001b:35).

Even though the way of life of the group of Polish EU officials is substantially different from the lifestyle of the "old" group of Polish immigrants to Brussels,[30] which mostly involved labour migration from the underprivileged north-east of Poland, certain negative stereotypes nevertheless seem also to affect the perception of them by the host society.

2.1.3.2. Stereotyping Eurocrats in Belgium

Bellier claims that the Eurocrats are targets of severe criticism (2002:84). They are depicted as privileged (Abélès et al. 1993:23; Shore 2000:193) and are commonly resented (by Belgians) for their favourable professional conditions (Cailliez 2004:87; Abélès et al. 1993:23) such as, among other things, high salaries, expatriate allowance, or job security, while Cailliez (2004) refers to a perception of EU officials as people who work little and earn too much. Moreover, the employees of the EU institutions are often blamed for being

[30] This difference is related not only to their high level of education, linguistic skills, and social and legal status, but also to the fact that they belong to a wider category of EU officials.

disconnected both from national and local realities (Shore 2000:162). Abélès has called them "a kind of disconnected mutants, with no roots" (2000:45).

The debate on budget cuts has shown how inaccurate their portrayal can be in the press. In an interview with Adam D. Rotfeld (former Minister of Foreign Affairs), a Polish journalist from *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Paweł Wroński, learned from his interviewee that EU officials have increased their earnings by 16% [*sic*] during the period of economic crisis.[31] As Rotfeld added: "they start to be perceived as arrogant people, totally isolated from the reality, fiercely defending their privileges" (ibid.). In this and similar articles[32] that appeared in Polish and foreign newspapers[33] available on the Internet there can be found very spiteful and bitter comments made by readers. Remarkably, Polish readers did not refrain from sharing very harsh opinions with regard to, as they call them, "Brussels scumbags with deep pockets"; "leeches"; "idiots"; "Brussels loafers"; "wasters"; "moronic bureaucrats"; "scroungers"; "smart alecs"; "Polish cream of bureaucratic obtuseness".[34] One commentator

[31] Wroński, P. (2012, November 23). A. Rotfeld, b. szef MSZ: Ustalono dobrą podstawę dalszych negocjacji". Retrieved from http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,12915883,A__Rotfeld__b__szef_MSZ__Ustalono_dobra_podstawe_dalszych.html#ixzz41mt35Vtp

[32] Szymańska-Borginon, K. (2012, November 14). Unijne oszczędności odbiją się na Polakach pracujących w Brukseli. Retrieved from http://www.rmf24.pl/ekonomia/news-unijne-oszczednosci-odbija-sie-na-polakach-pracujacych-w-bru,nId,709702#utm_source=paste&utm_medium=paste&utm_campaign=other

mapi, PAP. (2012, December 2). Wielka Brytania chce odchudzić unijną biurokrację. Retrieved from http://wyborcza.biz/biznes/1,147754,12966351,Wielka_Brytania_chce_odchudzic_unijna_biurokracje.html

(2012 November 18). Polscy urzędnicy ofiarą cięć w unijnym budżecie. Retrieved from http://biznes.onet.pl/wiadomosci/ue/polscy-urzednicy-ofiara-ciec-w-unijnym-budzecie/ngxvp

Jarecka, A., Deutsche Welle (2013 February 4). Nawet 21 tys. euro zarabia miesięcznie unijny urzędnik. To kilkakrotnie więcej od kanclerza Niemiec. Retrieved from http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/1,114873,13347396,Nawet_21_tys__euro_zarabia_miesiecznie_unijny_urzednik_.html

Potocka, J., Zespol wGospodarce.pl (2013, June 5). Strajk eurobiurokratów - nie chcą cięć. Retrieved from http://wgospodarce.pl/informacje/4540-strajk-eurobiurokratow-nie-chca-ciec

[33] see e.g., comments to the Web log post: Open Europe Blog. (2013 February 5). Should we feel sorry for underpaid EU civil servants? [Web log post]. Retrieved from http://openeuropeblog.blogspot.be/2013/02/should-we-feel-sorry-for-underpaid-eu.html?showComment=1360233946340

[34] Original wording - translated from Polish.

stated: "in Brussels there are no Polish civil servants, there are only Polish-speaking Jews,[35] all of them with no exception".

There was a similar, although less heated, debate on the Facebook group "Brussels Expats" after one of the group members posted a link to an article on a strike by EU officials related to possible budget cuts ("Of course, I feel so sorry for the EU people that have to work a 40 hour week for 12,000 euro a month, and to dash it all, they have to retire at 65! Horror, shock, gasp"; "just one thing, the Commission money is also our money ... They don't cultivate special trees to grow their own money! So each one of us is concerned by their strike as the EU salaries are financed by our taxes. I think what makes people NOT sympathizing with the European civil servants' fight is both that they have job security (a precious jewel today) and reasonably good salaries, especially for the hours they do. By fighting to preserve their priviledges, it sends a very bad signal to the people who already feel that they are in their crystal tower and deaf to the difficulties of most EU citizens ... Previous revolutions tended to destroy priviledges not maintain them"; "if i am not mistaken, they are also not taxed ... off course they are having the right to strike but their benefits are scandalous during crisis!").[36]

Without discussing the broader issue of the appropriateness of cuts or the justification for the strike, it should be noted that these opinions are partly based on inaccurate data: only a small fringe of EU officials earn as much as 12000 euro per month, their revenue is taxed, although at a lower rate than for Belgians, they have not obtained a 16% salary increase as their salaries evolve based on factors such as the average increase of cost of living in several European countries and the evolution of the salaries of member states officials.

The reason for this very negative attitude lies beyond the subject of this thesis. Among the explanations I heard most often from the EU officials themselves is the fact that

[35] Internet fora in Poland attract proponents of conspiracy theories, including anti-semitic ones.
[36] Data retrieved from messages posted to: Brussels Expats group on Facebook. (2012, November 21; original spelling).

national politicians often blame "Brussels" for unpopular decisions which they actually supported in the EU Council. EU policies are not widely understood, partly because of an inadequate information policy. EU officials are perceived as those who take decisions without being subject to direct democratic control. Although the same can be said about any public officials, unlike domestic ones the EU officials are hardly ever someone's neighbours, family members, or friends, as they are few and distant. Because of the nature of their tasks, they also have little professional contact with member states' populations. As such, they are the perfect target for media or press criticism, which has progressively turned them into one of the most hated professional groups in Europe, a true "public enemy". And they are obviously aware of this (e.g., Bellier 2002:84).

2.1.3.3. Polish EU officials: a double scapegoat?

Just because they are Eurocrats does not mean that the Polish employees of the EU institutions are not also subject to stereotyping about their nationality in addition to stereotyping about Eurocrats. Thus, in addition to the already not-so-positive image of EU officials, they have to deal with a stereotypical image associated with nationals of all "new" member states. Even before the accession, Willfried Spohn and Anna Triandafyllidou reported the growing impression that Western European countries are "rather reluctant to include Eastern Europe" (2003:7). In fact, the nationals of the ten "new" East-and-Central European member states that joined the European Union in 2004 might be perceived differently by the local population[37] from Western Europeans, as they might often be associated with a cheap and sometimes troublesome workforce. This specificity may affect their relations with Belgians, other EU officials, and, indirectly, other fellow nationals.

[37] I am aware of the fact that the local population is not homogenous from the ethnic, religious, cultural or probably yet other points of view. I explain the use I make of the word "local", as well as the reasons for this, further in the text. See, especially, subsection 2.3.1.

Originating in post-communist Europe and in spite of "Poland's fierce attachment to the West" (Davies 2001:301), Poles may be regarded both by the host society and civil servants from the "old" member states as a different category of EU officials. According to Anna Triandafyllidou (2002), shortly before the accession Central and Eastern Europeans were perceived "in the actual member states' public discourses, … as distant brethren or indeed as distant aliens" (Spohn and Triandafyllidou 2003:7) and there were fears that the accession of Central and Eastern European countries could negatively affect the integration process due to their fundamental difference from the West (Góra and Mach 2010:22). The understanding of their history and attitudes was lower than for other European nations who had been closely linked to Belgium throughout ages, and indeed the recent history of these accession states was radically different (communist totalitarianism and concomitant economic, political, and cultural transformations).

In addition to the particular perception of all "new" member states' nationals, a number of stereotypes, such as a very strong anticipated attachment to Catholicism and the Church or strong inclinations to heavy drinking, specifically concern Poles. Polish people are also by far the most numerous group of Central and Eastern Europeans in Brussels and have been present there for quite a long time. As such, they are certainly subject to much stronger emotions and stereotypes than, for example, Czechs or Slovenians. Indeed, they may be aware of strong prejudices against the Eurocrats, but also fear extrapolation of negative stereotypes about Eastern Europeans. These stereotypes have become widespread in Belgium thanks to the other Poles in Brussels (stereotypes which mainly relate to illegal builders and cleaning ladies), allegedly perceived as "underdog" physical workers, often causing troubles.

Thus, the Polish EU officials may expect that the Belgians would perceive them both as rich and over-privileged Eurocrats responsible, among other things, for skyrocketing real

estate prices and, at the same time, as representatives of a poor, backward, violent, and sometimes criminal immigrant community greedy for social benefits.

2.2. On the road: movement and movers

Having introduced the basic concepts necessary for the discussion of social and cultural integration, there is a need to briefly discuss the phenomena related to movement which are crucial for the definition of my research participants as a group. Indeed, they are all characterised by the fact that they have moved from one country to another. However, there are different kinds of movement and they produce different starting points for integration, so it is important to define the kind of displacement we are dealing with in the present study.

2.2.1. Migration, mobility and boundaries

Thomas Faist defines migration[38] as "a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence, usually across some type of administrative boundary" (2004:18). Hans van Amersfoort makes a distinction between "permanent" and "temporary" migration, qualifying "staff members of multinationals, bureaucrats in international organizations" as belonging to the latter category, and emphasizing that "the causes and consequences of migration differ between 'permanent' and 'temporary' migration" (1998:12).[39] Val Colic-Peisker claims that, as traditionally conceived, "immigrants" are those who move for the purpose of permanent settlement in another country where they are expected to acculturate (2010:468; see also Favell 2008b:269-270; Olwig 2007:88) and where they suffer from a disadvantaged position

[38] Even if, conventionally, "migration" is understood as "movement that occurs within national borders", whereas "immigration" refers to "movement across national borders" (Brettell and Hollifield 2008:21 n. 1), Brettell and Hollifield apply the term "migration" with reference to "international migration" (2008:22 n.1). In this thesis I will follow the same terminology.

[39] Jeffrey H. Cohen and Ibrahim Sirkeci see a migration decision as issued from a complex and emotional process involving multi-layer considerations based on migrants' "traditional beliefs, cultural expectations, and social practices", involving often "family members, relatives, and friends" (2011:14).

on the labour market and from a lowered social status (Colic-Peisker 2010:468).[40]

If, traditionally, the movement of people across borders and the resulting relations with the host society were referred to and analysed under the notion of migration, this term is often not considered appropriate anymore to describe certain types of contemporary movement which are not conceived of as one-off displacement, possibly followed by integration in a new society. This phenomenon is better conceptualized by the notion of mobility (for a more in depth analysis of the concept see Salazar 2016).

Mobility, as Tim Cresswell puts it, can be defined in the simplest way by a reference to a "displacement - the act of moving between locations" (2006:2). John Urry refers to several meanings of the term, notably to moving or being "*capable* of movement" (sometimes referred to as "motility"), but also to "mobility in the longer term sense of migration or other kinds of semi-permanent geographical movement" (2007:7-8). Weert Canzler, Vincent Kaufmann, and Sven Kesselring define mobility in broader terms, as comprising three elements: "movements, networks and motility" (the potential for movement) (2008:2).[41]

Finally, as observed by Salazar, physical displacement is also commonly understood in association with "symbolic 'moving up', be it economic, social, or cultural" (2016:2).

Some authors mention doubts that appeared at the end of 20th century as to the very pertinence of the notion of boundaries (Hannerz 2000:9; Donnan and Wilson 1999:10). Bashkow, by contrast, argues that globalisation has in fact galvanised certain phenomena related to boundaries, since, by intensifying flows across boundaries, it has increased the number of occasions at which people are confronted with boundaries (2004:454). Similarly,

[40] The word "migrant" is often used to designate people whose movement is perceived as permanent, for purpose of starting new life and without assuming a return (Favell 2008a:101-102). The term "migration" is sometimes "negatively valued and often criminalized" (Beck 2008:29) and its studies usually focus on low-skilled migrants (Olwig 2007:87; Fechter 2007b:21; Fechter and Walsh 2010:1197; Favell et al. 2007:16; Favell 2003b:400). By contrast, the term "mobility" is positively valued and is "a general principle of modernity" (Beck 2008:28).

[41] Kaufmann, Bergman and Joye define "motility" as "the capacity … to be mobile in social and geographic space, or as the way in which entities access and appropriate the capacity for socio-spatial mobility according to their circumstances" (Kaufmann et al. 2004:750).

Noel B. Salazar and Alan Smart claim that "mobilities and borders are not antithetical" (2011:iv). Salazar argues that the process of globalisation, although favouring mobility and the creation of links, also contributes to "immobility, exclusion, and disconnection" (2013:60). Such boundaries can be notably related to "social class, gender, age, lifestyle, ethnicity, nationality, and disability" (Salazar 2013:60; see also Amit 2007:10).

All these restrictions notwithstanding, there is indeed "the international cosmopolitan class" who are undisturbed by borders and who feel "at home in the world" (Hage 2005:470).[42] On the other hand, even if the life of such expatriates is unbounded by physical boundaries, they often remain constrained in other, subtler ways (e.g., social and cultural boundaries).

2.2.2. High-skilled foreigners: privileged movers[43]

As Robyn Iredale suggests, the proportion of "highly skilled migrants"[44] in overall global migration is on the rise (2001:8). This group can be referred to as "professional, managerial and technical (PMT) specialists" (Salt 1997:5), usually holding "a university degree or extensive/equivalent experience in a given field" (Iredale 2001:8).

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[42] According to Ulf Hannerz, cosmopolitanism evokes "a willingness to engage with the Other", openness towards various cultural experiences, and eagerness for immersion in other cultures (1990:239-241). David Ley, describes cosmopolitans as those, who are open for encounters with different cultures, ready to operate in unfamiliar contexts, without prejudices and on the basis of "equality and respect" (2004:159). The notion of "cosmopolitanism" appears in this thesis often in direct or indirect quotations – either by other authors or by my research participants. It is not always clear in what meaning it is used. In case of my research participants, it is probably used as a proxy to "deterritorialised", "international" or "multicultural". Myself, I refer to this term as it was defined by Hannerz (1990), but also with regard to "cosmopolitan transnationalism" (*infra*).

[43] Those higher-end migrants who do not fit the category of economic or labour migrants are also called, usually with reference to European or North American nationals moving for professional reasons, "'privileged migrants', 'expatriates' or 'mobile professionals'" (Fechter and Walsh 2010:1198; see also Colic Peisker 2010; Fechter 2007b), or "'elite' migrants", "transnational elites", "global elites" (Favell 2003b:410-411). Leonard observes that such terms as "lifestyle migrants" (see also Benson 2011), "privileged migrants" and "mobile professionals", refer to those "relatively affluent (and usually white) individuals", whose purpose of movement is the improvement of their life quality, but also "upward social mobility" and "career enhancement" (2010a:2).

[44] John Salt distinguishes twelve different categories within the group of "temporary highly skilled migrants", such as: "corporate transferees"; "technicians/visiting firemen"; health and education employees often working for non-governmental organisations; "project specialists"; "consultant specialists"; "private career development and training"; "clergy and missionaries"; "entertainers, sportspeople and artists"; "business people and independently wealthy"; academics, researchers and students; "military personnel"; and spouses and children of these categories (1997:6-8).

Much of the conceptualisation work concerning "expatriates" has been done in the context of developing countries and post-colonial settings (see e.g., Fechter and Walsh 2010:1201; Fechter 2007b:160). However, the term has entered into the common language and is broadly used by EU officials in Brussels and by other mobile professionals themselves. For this reason, even though it is, indeed, crucial to distinguish between past findings which are relevant only in the "developing" countries and those which may have more universal usefulness, I decided to stick to the term "expatriate" which I will use interchangeably with the term "high skilled migrants" or "high skilled movers".

Several authors highlight the heterogeneous character of expatriates or the diversity of their lifestyles and living conditions (Fechter and Walsh 2010:1201; Fechter 2007a:36; 2007b:6; Leonard 2010a:8). They differ as regards their educational level and occupational status and the forms of their mobility (Fechter and Walsh 2010:1200). If some of them take their power from the big transnational companies they work for, others are employed, for instance, in modest aid organizations or small and medium-sized enterprises (Leonard 2010a:8).

Based on her research on Western expatriates in Indonesia, Fechter specifically draws attention to the phenomena of living apart from the local people and creating an "expatriate bubble" (Fechter 2007a, 2007b), also referred to as expatriate "enclaves" (E. Cohen 1977:16). The aforementioned observations do seem to apply to all privileged movers, including EU officials. Several authors emphasize the often transient character of an expatriate's stay in a country, usually limited by the specified term contracts (see e.g., Amit 2007:9; Beaverstock 2011:712; E. Cohen 1977; Farrer 2010; Klekowski von Koppenfels 2014:23). This is why expatriates are believed to have no incentive to integrate with the host society. Erik Cohen suggests that they may even consciously seclude themselves in the expatriate environment, so as to protect their privileged status (1977:24). This strategy may appear rational in countries

where their expatriate status in the host country gives them a significant advantage over the local population, but not necessarily in Belgium.

Improved status[45] may, as illustrated by Fechter (2007b:2), derive from increased wealth, stimulated by generous expatriation packages[46] (see also Beaverstock 2011:712).

Both Fechter and Leonard refer to the negative image of expatriates and the term's negative connotations which are related to their alleged "greed, ignorance, and a personal lack of interest in the host society"; "luxury, leisure or moral decline abroad" (Fechter 2007b:3-4); or "lavish lifestyles, hedonistic pleasures and social irresponsibility" (Leonard 2010a:1).

2.2.3. Mobility within the European Union: before and after the EU enlargement

"We are not 'migrants', we are just 'Europeans'" (Favell 2008a:103).

Adrian Favell observes that internally mobile EU citizens "do not think of themselves as migrants" (2008b:274; 2008a:103). He calls intra-European movers "*prototypical* European citizens" (Favell 2005:1), able to "build lives – careers, networks, relationships, families – beyond the nation-state containers that once defined personal identity and personal history" (2008a:3).

As Favell remarks, the successive Eastern enlargements contributed to important population moves (2008c:701). The populations of Western member states[47] feared the possible consequences of the free movement of Eastern and Central Europeans (Favell and Nebe 2009:206).[48] Favell suggests that the latter may indeed face some "formal barriers and subtler forms of prejudice" (2008a: ix; see also Favell and Nebe 2009; Favell and Recchi

[45] Erik Cohen stressed that "contrary to most other types of migrants, the expatriates often actually *gain* status by their move abroad, rather than lose it" (1977:22).

[46] A number of authors point out that the assumption, concerning the high financial and social status of expatriates is becoming less and less true, as a result of changing human resources policies. Notably, competition brings down the salaries of expatriates and reduces expatriation packages, while multinational companies tend to recruit local skilled workforce (Leonard 2010a:76; see also Amit 2007:3; Kurotani 2007:17).

[47] See e.g., http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/anti-immigrant-feeling-in-britain-is-on-the-rise-according-to-major-new-research-9042307.html

[48] As Favell puts it, "West European states have shown themselves to be far less keen on the movement of people westwards than they are on the gold rush of Western capital East" (2008c:702).

2009:24). After the fall of the Iron Curtain, Eastern European immigrants were described in public debates as "profiteers, criminals, bogus, and simply floods of foreigners" (Verstraete 2010:90). Favell and Nebe refer to multiple studies which denounce popular fears related to migration from Central and Eastern Europe and predict that the EU movers from these countries will end up becoming "indistinguishable from their mobile West European counterparts" (2009:205).

2.2.4. Eurocrats: migrants or expats?

The EU officials are neither standard "economic migrants" [49] who leave their home country in order to escape poverty, nor typical expatriates, even if they seem to share certain patterns with these categories.

Much like other Brussels expatriates, the EU officials differ from economic migrants with their usually high level of qualification and elevated professional and economic status (Gatti 2009:2, 5). Cailliez counts the EU officials among the "high status foreigners" distinguished by their high socio-economic status and qualifications, as opposed to "immigrants", defined as "occupying a subaltern position in the socio-economic structure of the country of settlement" (2004:10-11).[50] The latter do not leave their home countries for economic or political reasons or because of "the precarious life conditions", and they do not fit into a traditionally conceived model of assimilation into the local population (Cailliez 2004:10). Unlike "ordinary" migrants, the mobility of EU officials is triggered by a variety of professional reasons, not necessarily of a directly economic nature, such as the opportunity of new professional experiences, which can generally be characterized as "pull" rather than

[49] Even if, e.g., Castles and Miller seem to conceive "highly-skilled personnel" as a sub-category of economic migrants (2003:178).
[50] Unless otherwise noted, all translations from French and Polish are my own.

"push" factors (Castles and Miller 2003). [51] It is important to stress that they do not "migrate" to Belgium as such; they move to work in the EU institutions.

However, the employees of the EU institutions do not entirely belong to the category of expatriates either. In most cases, "expats"[52] stay in Brussels for a short time, whereas EU officials usually settle there for a long period of time since the statutory officials are granted life-long employment in sharp contrast to contractual agents and temporary officials[53] who work on renewable fixed-term contracts.[54] As Ann Stevens and Handley Stevens observe, EU civil servants do not assume that their stay will be temporary and hence do not usually keep a "career base in their country of origin" (2001:131). On the other hand, as the authors observe, based on the plans which Eurocrats make concerning retirement and their children's future, "they do not expect or aim for total assimilation of their family into their country of residence" (Stevens and Stevens 2001:131). Undoubtedly, the perspective of life-long stay in Belgium together with the privileges and rights granted, should influence their integration and make it different from integration patterns both of ordinary "expatriates" and common migrants.

Although the EU officials differ in significant ways from corporate expatriates in developing countries living lives similar to those of colonial officials, they also have something in common with them. Indeed, as with foreign diplomats, they enjoy a number of distinctive privileges, such as special vehicle registration plates or a special travel allowance if their home is "sufficiently far away" (Stevens and Stevens 2001:131). Most importantly, as with ordinary expats, "the institutional lifestyle" of the EU officials and living in a "rarefied

[51] "Push-pull" theories of migration conceive reasons for migration as based on a combination of "push factors" (forcing people to leave) and "pull factors" (attracting people to come) (Castles and Miller 2003:22; see also Van Amersfoort 1998:14).

[52] According to Nancy L. Green, "expat" is a "colloquial abbreviation" for "expatriate", which was popularized in the 1960s in British colonies (2009:323).

[53] According to the statistics provided by the European Commission, in February 2016, there were 22.244 permanent officials, 1.086 temporary staff, 6.679 contract agents and 2.891 others on the total of 32.900. See http://ec.europa.eu/civil_service/docs/europa_sp2_bs_dist_staff_en.pdf

[54] Many of temporary employees stay in Brussels after the end of their second term contracts, looking for employment in other DGs or other EU institutions.

environment" separate them from the host society (Shore 2000:6).

2.3. Starting a new life: adaptation and integration

Attempts to conceptualize social and cultural phenomena resulting from migration have led to the proliferation of notions describing the social and cultural consequences of the encounter between migrants and the host population. Adrian Favell and Jeanette Schoorl refer to various terms similar to integration, such as assimilation, absorption, acculturation, accommodation, incorporation, inclusion, and insertion (Favell 2001b:352; Schoorl 2005:2; see also Vertovec 2009:77; Bosswick and Heckmann 2006:2 also mentioning adaptation). According to Favell, the term "integration" has replaced these similar terms, some of them having become "politically unfashionable" (2001b:352).

Interactions of migrants with the host country used to be assessed from the point of view of assimilation into the new society (Portes and Böröcz 1989:614; Colic-Peisker 2006:211-212) in line with "methodological nationalism" (e.g., Amelina, Faist, Glick Schiller and Nergiz 2012; Glick Schiller 2010; Glick Schiller and Salazar 2012; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002, 2003).[55] According to the dominant nationalistic logic, migrants "arriving with particular distinctive national norms" are perceived as "the fundamental threat to social solidarity" (Glick Schiller 2010:111).[56] As a result of globalisation, the analytical paradigms have moved, and so have the "conceptualizations of the local, national, regional, and global" (Glick Schiller 1997:155). Tim Cresswell claims that culture is "hybrid, dynamic" (2006:1), while Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller point to growing interconnectedness, with fluidity and movement replacing fixed boundaries, structures, and sedentariness (2002:326).

[55] Glick Schiller defines the term as "an ideological orientation that approaches the study of social and historical processes as if they were contained within the borders of individual nation-states" (2010:110-111), whose members "are assumed to share a common history and set of values, norms, social customs and institutions (Beck 2000; Chernilo 2007)" (Glick Schiller 2010:111; see also Glick Schiller and Salazar 2012:9).

[56] In fact, as Wimmer and Glick Schiller observe, "the different postwar theories of immigrant integration ... all presuppose that the relevant entities to be related are a nation/state/society (not necessarily a homogenous one) on the one hand, and immigrants coming from outside this nation/state/society on the other" (2002:310).

Today, people often belong to more than one culture and their social relations go beyond the boundaries of one society (Inda and Rosaldo 2007:21-23). Several scholars stress that migration is no longer a one-way movement followed by settlement and integration, but a much more complex process (Glick Schiller, Basch and Szanton Blanc 1992; Brettell 2008:120; Colic-Peisker 2006:211; Faist 2000:190; Favell 2008b:270; Grillo 2007:208; Morokvasic 2004:19-20; Portes 1997, 2003; Vertovec 2001). Against this background, the very notion of assimilation of migrants had to be reconsidered. The question emerged as to what integration should actually stand for and what the immigrants should (and can) actually integrate with.

In reference to the American context, Barbara Schmitter Heisler states that the concept of assimilation has been replaced by the concepts of integration, incorporation, and segmented assimilation (2008:84). She also points at the recognition of a plurality of different incorporation models (Schmitter Heisler 2008:85).

A possible alternative to the classic model of "straight-line assimilation"[57] (Gans 1992; Alba and Nee 1997) into the host society, may constitute "segmented assimilation" (Portes and Zhou 1993), which recognizes that migrants might follow various trajectories and come to different outcomes (assimilating in different "segments" depending on e.g., their race, ethnicity, and class) and accommodating the idea of parallel attachments (Vertovec 2009:79). This was conceptualised in the nineties by the researchers Portes and Zhou (1993) and entails that the host society cannot be regarded as monolithic (Colic-Peisker 2006:213). Eriksen alludes to segmented assimilation (without referring to it explicitly) when he mentions integration into a community (*Gemeinschaft*) as an alternative to integration into the society (*Gesellschaft*) (Eriksen 2007:1061, see *infra*)

[57] In the classic model, assimilation is seen as "a largely one-way process", entailing that "the minority group adopt[s] the core culture" of the host society (Alba and Nee 1997:830; see also Bosswick and Heckman 2006:6). In line with this model, assimilation followed a downward and straight line trend that would inevitably end with the eventual total disappearance of all traces of ethnicity after several native-born generations" (Gans 1992:44; see also Grzymała-Kazłowska 2008:43-44).

In this section I briefly explain the concepts related to the "adjustment" of Polish EU officials as referred to in my thesis.

2.3.1. Complexity in social and cultural integration

Eriksen (2007) proposes a view on social processes (and notably the integration of migrants) which takes into account the complexity of research perspectives and the situations researched. He argues that this approach lets us to go beyond single-factor reasoning and describe the researched patterns in a much more precise manner (without pretensions to exhaustiveness) and to reconcile different views and analyses. As applied to the analysis of relations between migrant groups and the host society, this approach allows one to multiply (legitimate) narratives, taking into account a variety of definitions of each of the groups involved, the differing attitudes and aspirations of such groups (open/closed), the type of relations and processes scrutinized (social/cultural), and the factors at the origin of the process (chosen/enforced) (Eriksen 2007).

The example explored by Eriksen (2007) is not exactly the same as the subject of this research. It is true that my research group are not "ordinary" migrants but a hybrid between economic migrants and expatriates. There are, nonetheless, important similarities and the patterns of analysis proposed by Eriksen seem perfectly relevant.

The first nuance must be introduced in defining the local society. Semantically, this term should embrace the totality of the Brussels population who are permanently settled there and considering themselves as such. However, this group is culturally diverse and not fully socially coherent. Without entering into details, it is enough to mention that it embraces, in addition to the French-speaking autochtonous majority, an important Flemish autochtonous minority, as well as several groups which are either viewed or see themselves as distinct on the basis of their religious, linguistic, or ethnic specificities. Whenever I asked questions

containing references to the local people, the answers of my respondents mostly suggested an understanding of this term as limited to the "mainstream" Belgians, thus tacitly excluding these culturally and socially distinct communities. For this reason, to be faithful to the "emic" approach, I use the term "local" in this meaning (unless otherwise specified and except for where the cultural categorisation is not relevant in a given case). Further specifications and sub-divisions are possible, based on such criteria as profession, lifestyle, political activism, or particular hobbies. However, although patterns of integration into, for example, the local gay community, Pentecostal community, or dog breeding community may indeed present important specificities, it was impossible to take them all into account, even if the relations between these sub-groups and the corresponding sub-groups of Polish EU officials might be substantially different than the relations between the "main" groups. Nevertheless, the accounts of my respondents and interviewees deviated sometimes from the mainstream due to the fact that they were, for example, involved in political activism or belonged to supranational associations (like the Rotary Club).

Importantly, the local society in the broader sense also embraces, on one hand, other Polish people and, on the other, other EU officials and expats. These sub-groups needed to be considered separately, as they were, by their very nature, positioned very differently towards my research group as compared to other inhabitants of Brussels.

Another important aspect is the determination of the actual aspirations of the research participants, as well as possible pressure from the host (Belgian) society, and thus the existence of internal or external pressure. Eriksen notes that:

> Minorities, it is often tacitly assumed, ought to be "integrated" into the host society, for their own benefit and that of greater society. However, since there are very important differences between the adaptations between individual immigrants, ethnic and religious immigrant groups, and between majority individuals, groups and greater society, some clarification is needed. What exactly is it that we are talking about when we say "cultural complexity"? (2007:1060)

In the case of my research group, this observation and the following question must be further nuanced. Intuitively, it is obvious that EU officials are not a minority in the same sense as ethnic minorities or typical immigrant communities, such as (for example) Turks or Italians in Brussels. On the other hand, if Eriksen's reflections on the application of complexity to social and cultural integration may be far less relevant in the case of the majority of short-term expatriates, they may still be usefully applied to EU officials whose stay in Brussels is usually much longer.

Different fractions or sub-groups of the local society may show unequal openness towards other groups, such as Polish EU officials. They may be willing to accept certain elements of their cultural difference or expect full submission to the local ways. They might be willing to include them in their social life or merely tolerate their presence. Similarly, the host society may either expect different newcomers to integrate in the new country or may not have such expectations, and this might also vary depending on its specific segment.[58]

EU officials usually either come to Brussels as appointed officials, in which case they may envisage permanent, life-long settlement in Brussels, or at least with the objective of passing the *concours* and turning their contract into such a longer term appointment.

However, individual motivations may differ. Some of my respondents may intend to leave the institutions after some time. Independently of whether they will actually do it or change their plan after a few years, the initial attitude may affect their lifestyle and their social relations. Some of these individuals might be willing to achieve a higher level of integration in Belgian society – both social, by participation in the social life and structures of the host society, and cultural, by learning the language and adopting certain elements of the lifestyle of the local people. Others might want to do it in a selective manner, for example by

[58] I heard several French speaking Belgians expressing disappointment and lack of understanding for EU officials and their families for not mastering the French language. Equally, I spoke to several Flemish people who indirectly referred to the cultural integration of EU officials and other expats into the French-speaking majority as a factor contributing to the progressive loss of the Flemish character of the Flemish capital.

showing openness towards certain elements of the local society in the broader sense and excluding other elements (e.g., certain linguistic or immigrant communities). They might agree to socialize with Belgians, but refuse any other participation in social and political life, such as voting in local elections. They might tend to integrate socially but not culturally, sticking to their lifestyles and preferences, or *vice versa*.

In this regard, it is worth mentioning Eriksen's observation that integration may also occur at different levels, for instance at the level of the society and at the level of the community (2007:1061). In the case of my research group, one might consider their relations with Belgian society, but also with different communities, such as the Poles in Brussels, the other EU officials, and the international expatriate community.

Finally, any sort of integration into Brussels may be associated with other, parallel social activities in Poland, other European countries, and Polish groupings in Brussels. Getting closer to the host society does not necessarily imply abandoning or even relaxing one's ties with other countries or groups. This phenomenon, known as transnationalism, has been considered particularly common among expatriates.

Obviously, this complex picture cannot be studied in its entirety in the context of one study. My research has concerned Polish EU officials in Brussels, hence certain external factors influencing their life in Brussels and their relations with the host society are referred to and taken into account only insofar as they come up with my research participants or based on earlier literature on the subject. Most importantly, my ambition is to describe and understand certain patterns concerning the adaptation and identifications of Polish EU officials in Brussels and not to give a full, detailed picture of this phenomenon or construct any universally applicable model. Therefore, some of the aforementioned aspects will serve only as a background; I refer to them with "inverted commas" to indicate the limited and somewhat conventional validity of my findings.

2.3.2. Integration

Schoorl contends that integration is commonly defined as "the process by which immigrants become part of the social cultural and institutional fabric of the receiving society" (2005:1). Still, as Grzymała-Kazłowska and Łodziński observe, the term is used in different domains in different ways (for research purposes, but also e.g., in political discourses) and is traditionally understood in different manners in different countries (2008:245). Similarly, following Bosswick and Heckmann, integration may be "understood as the process of inclusion of immigrants in the institutions and relationships of the host society" (2006:1).

John W. Berry distinguishes integration as one of the four acculturation strategies,[59] characterised by an interest in maintaining the original culture and in participation in the host society's interactions (Berry 2005:704; see also Berry et al. 2002:354).

This approach is echoed in anthropology by Eriksen who mentions "three principal strategies" applied by states "in their dealings with minorities", notably, "segregation", "assimilation", and "integration" (2015:355-356). In short, "segregation" leads to a situation in which "the minority group becomes physically separated from the majority" (Eriksen 2015:355); "assimilation" is seen as "a possible outcome" consisting in the eventual melting of a minority into a majority group (Eriksen 2015:356). Last but not least, "integration" "usually refers to participation in the shared institutions of society, combined with the maintenance of group identity and some degree of cultural distinctiveness. It represents a compromise between the two other main options" (Eriksen 2015:356).

[59] Among the four acculturation strategies distinguished by Berry, "assimilation" stands for a strategy where individuals are keen on abandoning their cultural identity and are willing to melt in the dominant society, "integration" is a strategy, where individuals are interested both in participating in interactions within the dominant group and in maintaining their culture of origin, while interest in preserving one's original culture coupled with reluctance to interact with the dominant group is qualified as "separation". Finally, lack of interest both in preserving the original culture and in the absorption in the dominant society is qualified as "marginalization" (Berry 2005:705; see also Berry 1997:9). Berry also remarks that the choice of the strategy is sometimes imposed or influenced by the dominant group. In this case, the author re-qualifies assimilation, separation, marginalization and integration as, respectively, "melting pot", "segregation", "exclusion" and "multiculturalism" (Berry 2005:706).

Berry (1991) stressed that a necessary condition for integration to be successfully pursued by non-dominant groups is the openness and inclusiveness of the dominant society (Berry 1997:10; 2005:705).

Schoorl identifies four significant dimensions of integration. These are: (1) "structural integration",[60] referring to the access of immigrants to "the major institutions of society, such as education, the labour and housing markets, the political system, health care services, etc.", (2) "social integration", concerning the intensity and nature of interactions with members of the host society, (3) "cultural integration" which stands for sharing "the same norms, values and preferences", and (4) "the *identity dimension*" (Schoorl 2005:2; see also Alaminos and Santacreu 2009:101).

As further developed by Antonio Alaminos and Oscar Santacreu, "social integration" refers to the migrants' acquaintances, and its level can be measured by "the number and nationality of friends" and the ability to communicate in the host country's language as a necessary condition for interaction (2009:102). According to the authors, "cultural integration" refers to preference for the host country's culture, "their acceptance of values and lifestyles different from those of their country of origin" (2009:109), determining their "strategies for dealing with the new society of residence" (2009:103). "Cultural integration" cannot be easily measured, as it refers to subjective attitudes (Alaminos and Santacreu 2009:110). The scholars add that integration is also influenced by the immigrants' intention to stay or move further (or back). The authors also remark that the different levels of integration do not necessarily advance at the same pace. Importantly, as they argue, "in order to better understand the complex interplay between cultural and social integration, we need to know not only how migrants feel, but also how they feel they are perceived by the society around them" (Alaminos and Santacreu 2009:112). This is in line with the approach proposed

[60] Alaminos and Santacreu (2009) refer to "structural integration" as "socioeconomic integration".

by Eriksen (2007).

This is the reason why I investigated the stereotyping and anticipated image of the Poles and EU officials during my research, as perceived and felt by the Polish EU officials themselves. The authors note that, "even in Western European societies, where cultural distance is not dramatic ... , EU citizens living abroad may still feel discriminated against" (Alaminos and Santacreu 2009:112).

The concept of "social integration" has also been explored by Wolfgang Bosswick and Friedrich Heckmann (2006). The authors describe the phenomenon as "the inclusion and acceptance of immigrants into the core institutions, relationships and positions of a host society" (2006:11). As has been emphasized, immigrants do not necessarily integrate with the majority, and immigration can instead result in segregation following the "reproduction of ethnic identity and integration into an ethnic colony", in "segmented integration into a subculture" or in marginalization (Bosswick and Heckmann 2006:11).

The authors also further define "cultural integration" (understood as one of the dimensions of social integration) as referring to the acquisition of the essential competencies of the culture of the host society, implying "cognitive, behavioural and attitudinal change" (Bosswick and Heckmann 2006:9-10). This meaning of "cultural integration" seems to broadly correspond to the meaning given by my interviewees and respondents to "adaptation".

2.3.3. Adaptation

As defined by John W. Berry, adaptation, "refers to the relatively stable changes that take place in any individual or group in response to external demands" (Berry 2005:709; see also Berry 1997:13). While drawing on Ward (1996), Berry refers to adaptation as a double

phenomenon in that it is both psychological[61] and sociocultural (2005:709). Its first aspect refers to "one's psychological and physical well-being", whereas the second refers to the ability to cope with everyday life in the new cultural context (Berry 2005:709; see also Berry 1997:20; Berry et al. 2002:370).[62]

Adaptation, as defined above, does not always bring the individuals concerned closer to the group they live in (ibid.). The response to external demands may actually take the form of resistance, separation, or active endeavours to change the group (Berry 2005:709; Berry 1997:20; Berry et al. 2002:370) – in this case, the host society. The author suggests that the two aforementioned types of adaptation may have different dynamics in this respect: psychological adaptation involves "problems" in the initial phase and subsequent improvement, with possible remissions and a variable rhythm, while sociocultural adaptation "typically has a linear improvement with time" (Berry 2005:709; Berry 1997:20; Berry et al. 2002: 370).

The above definition seems to broadly correspond to the understanding of the notion which my research participants had. They perceived adaptation as a more superficial process, permitting them to live and function normally in a foreign society, as opposed to "integration", perceived as a step further towards the host society.

[61] Alaminos and Santacreu (2009) list indicators of a "psychological adaptation". One of such indicators is homesickness with regard to "family, friends and food" ("*primary groups"*), the "*civic culture* of the migrants' country of origin" ("social norms") and its lifestyles, hence "traditions, customs, folklore, celebrations" ("*culture*") (Alaminos and Santacreu 2009:117).

[62] Similarly, with reference to "adjustment" of expatriates, Aycan (1997) sees the process as a multidimensional phenomenon and distinguishes between psychological, socio-cultural and work adjustment. The first refers to "mental health or psychological well-being", the second to the ability to smoothly function in the society (including "engaging in positive interpersonal relations with the members of the host society"), while the last is related to positive attitude to one's work and ability to effective discharge of tasks (Aycan 1997:436-437).

2.3.4. Transnationalism

As mentioned earlier, in the past immigrants were perceived as uprooted people who "come to stay" and "pledge allegiance" (Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc 1995:4) and were naturally meant to be incorporated into the new culture and society (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Szanton Blanc 1995:48; see also Rouse 1992:25-26). However, these days are gone (Vertovec 2001:574). Since the 1990s, the transnationalism perspective has gained in popularity and may be seen as an attempt to take into account the developments leading to the decline in popularity of the abovementioned "'straight-line' assimilation" model which is strongly rooted in "methodological nationalism" (Colic-Peisker 2006:212-213).

Transnational migration can be defined as "the process by which immigrants forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement" (Glick Schiller et al. 1995:48).[63] As Eriksen observes, "*transnationalism* directs attention, rather, to a social existence attaching individuals and groups not primarily to one particular place, but to several or none" (2015:313). Importantly, their "public identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation-state (Glick Schiller *et al.* 1992a; Basch *et al.* 1994)" (Glick Schiller et al. 1995:48). According to Basch et al., a characteristic feature of "transnationalism" is "the multiplicity of involvements that transmigrants sustain in both home and host societies" (1995:7; see also Vertovec 2001:573).

Steven Vertovec emphasizes "the complex relationships between modes of transnationalism and integration" (2009:79).[64] As Vertovec goes on to say, migrants can become integrated into the new country, develop loyalty and a sense of belonging, and yet

[63] However, Schmitter Heisler (2008) expresses her scepticism with the concept. While acknowledging the existence of the phenomenon, thus immigrants engaged in home-country related activities and maintaining intensive links within the home country, she challenges the need for conceptualization of this phenomenon (Schmitter Heisler 2008:96).

[64] Importantly, Marta Kindler contends that the transnationalist approach challenged the traditional idea that ties in the country of origin pose an obstacle to integration. On the contrary, transnational ties are perceived as a factor facilitating inclusion and functioning in the country of settlement (2008:71).

"the strongest senses of cohesion or belonging may remain with others in a homeland or elsewhere in a diaspora" (2009:78). As he stresses, this is not a "zero sum game" and various attachments do not need to be mutually detrimental while the connections established or maintained do not need to be total, but may well remain partial and selective (Vertovec 2009:80).

Many migrants still attach great importance to the social networks left behind in the country of origin (Hyvönen 2008:421), especially in the initial period after arrival in a new country (2008:431). As Heli Hyvönen suggests, this may be due to the challenges of living in a new country and the lack of social networks, but also to "confusion about the foreign society and its customs" (2008:431). Favell considers that, although links with family usually remain substantially intact, maintaining contacts with friends back home is often a challenge (2008a:203).

Caroline B. Brettell remarks that the concept of transnationalism catches up with the development of new modes of communication and transportation that "have shortened the social distance between sending and receiving societies" (2008:120; see also Castles and Miller 2003:47; Vertovec 1999:451-452).[65] According to Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt, highly-skilled professionals are even more likely than other categories of "movers", to form or join transnational communities due to their easier access to the infrastructure which lets them cultivate such links (Portes et al. 1999: 224; see also Favell 2003b: 399, 401). However, this could be more true fifteen years ago when electronic means of instantaneous communication were more expensive and less widespread than today.

Jonathan Beaverstock found that British expatriates in New York communicated on a

[65] Basch et al. (1995) observes, it is not technology which enabled this phenomenon (see also Colic-Peisker 2006:212; Portes et al. 1999:224; Vertovec 1999:447, 449), but transnational ties are rather due to social and economic factors, as, "the current moment of capitalism as a global mode of production that has necessitated the maintenance of family ties and political allegiances among persons spread across the globe" (Basch et al. 1995:24). Grzymała-Kazłowska and Łodziński mention also the increase of knowledge and cultural competences of migrants among the reasons for the change (2011:22).

daily basis, via email, telephone, or video-conferencing with former colleagues, friends, and family back in their country of origin (2005:266). An important part of the social life of both categories of expatriates distinguished by Fechter (young professionals and family expatriates) consisted of contacts maintained through virtual space (2007b:54, 137-138; see also Butcher 2009:1364). The Internet was used to maintain existing (transnational) social networks and to get social support from family or friends at home (Fechter 2007b:137).[66]

Based on her research on Croatian migrants in Australia, Val Colic-Peisker distinguishes between two types of transnationalism based on social class and cultural capital, namely the "ethnic" (bi-national) transnationalism of working-class migrants[67] and the "cosmopolitan" (trans-national) transnationalism of middle-class professionals (2006:220). She describes "ethnic transnationalism" as "an enduring connection of migrants with their place and community of origin" (Colic-Peisker 2006:220) based on an "ethnic component of identity" (2006:220). By contrast, "cosmopolitan transnationalism" is based on their "de-territorial, acquired … professional identification" as members of the global, mobile middle-class and "transcends the ethno-national and territorial principle" (Colic-Peisker 2006:223). As she concludes, "'cosmopolitan transnationalism', develops through immersion of migrants into another culture and their cultural and identity extension and hybridization" (Colic-Peisker 2006: 226). The middle-class professionals described in her study did not consider their stay in Australia to be final and, consequently, they "developed a type of cosmopolitan identity, using their Australian acculturation as a stepping stone" (Colic-Peisker 2006:222-223).

[66] A few years earlier, Vertovec described "cheap calls" as "a kind of social glue connecting small-scale social formations across the globe" (2004:220).

[67] In the sense as described by Alejandro Portes and his colleagues who already in the 1990s pointed at "a growing number of persons who live dual lives: speaking two languages, having homes in two countries, and making a living through continuous regular contact across national borders" (Portes et al. 1999:217). Kay Deaux draws attention to the altered pattern on experiences of the migrants today: instead of being immersed in a foreign environment, one usually settles in a very similar community to the one at home (2006:25).

2.3.5. Integration and adaptation of expatriates in Brussels

Favell refers to the common – as he sees it – idea that privileged, mobile professionals are subject neither to discrimination and barriers nor to the integrative pressure often experienced by poorer, "'ethnic' migrants" (2001a:18). They are perceived as those who can benefit from and capitalise on "their transnational lifestyles and mobility" without being exposed to the negative aspects of expatriation (Favell 2001a:18). Faist adds that their adaptation looks different from the adaptation patterns characteristic to labour migrants (2004:25).

However, Favell, Feldblum, and Smith challenge this idea and claim that these "human capital-rich" people face similar problems of "discrimination, exploitation and/or exclusion" as other categories of foreigners (2007:21; see also Favell 2003b:423; Fechter 2007a, 2007b).

Also in Brussels, "expats" are believed not to integrate into the host society any better than other migrants (Gatti 2009:3). Cailliez does not see any point in speaking about the integration or assimilation of this population simply because "high-status foreigners" do not want it and instead they prefer to stick to their status of being foreigners (2004:10). On the other hand, Favell observes that the attitude of Belgians to European foreigners settled in Brussels is usually and increasingly (with successive enlargements) based on negative stereotypes (2008a:49).

Favell contends that the life of highly skilled mobile professionals abroad, "liberated from 'national' lifestyles, values and constraints", is "merely an extension of the life they would have back home" (2003b:402). As a result, Jonathan X. Inda and Renato Rosaldo remark that their trans-cultural and trans-national competencies take them away from "the nationalizing apparatuses of the nation-state" (2007:23). Favell claims that highly skilled professionals do not really have to, or are not eager to, integrate with Belgians because they feel adapted to the international strata of inhabitants of a "global city" (2008a:54-55;

2003b:413; 2001a:47). They are at least able to "acculturate selectively", according to their specific needs and preferences (Favell 2003b:413). In this regard, Favell, Feldblum, and Smith refer to the integration of this group as "integration *à la carte*", where individuals choose aspects of the host culture and sphere of life of the host society that they want to integrate with, a series of opt-ins and opt-outs (Favell et al. 2007:21). Favell (2001a) suggests that, for "free movers", the heterogeneity of host societies changes the perception of integration. This is the case with Brussels which cannot be ascribed to one particular dominant culture and where a variety of cultures coexist within the city (Favell 2001a:47). According to the scholar, the multicultural character of the city provides multiple avenues of integration and favours the development of a "strong identification with the city" (Favell 2001a:47). Therefore, Favell proposes an alternative to integration into Belgian culture, namely integration with the "international, multicultural city" (2001a:47; 2008a:54-55). The author suggests that the absence of "assimilative 'national' pressures" is a unique phenomenon which is specific to Brussels (Favell 2001a:4; 2008a:57). As he explains, even if foreign residents might actually have an interest in integration, they "should not be expected to integrate into Belgian social circles", as Brussels is "a genuinely international space" (Favell 2001a:4; see also 2008a:55). The author claims that "European foreign residents" in Brussels are already well integrated in economic terms through their participation as consumers and service users, and in social and cultural terms through their participation in expatriate networks and cultural activities (Favell 2001a:47; see also 2008a:51). What Favell labels "integration into Brussels" (2008a:54) appears to be, in fact, integration into the expatriate, or more generally, international part of the city and the specificity of Brussels in this regard seems to be mainly the size of the affluent, non-economic-migrant, foreign population, but also the heterogeneity of the local population in a broader sense.

However, Favell et al. saw drawbacks in what they referred to as "selective

integration" (2007:21). This type of integration hardly ever works in the sense that the foreigners effectively remain outside the host society and have little impact, politically or socially, on their functioning (2007:21). Indeed, the analysis of Favell must be read in the context of the objectives of such "integration into the city" (2001a:47). If what Favell means is the ability to function smoothly (what I will refer to, following the practice of my research participants, as "adaptation"), then, indeed, no extensive contacts with the host population are necessary. Participation in social and cultural life can also be secured, but if the objective was to influence local matters or even have some form of co-ownership of the city space, such segmented integration does not seem to be an adequate tool for achieving it.

The question sketched by the authors quoted above comes down to the very notion of "integration". Can one be "integrated into a city" (or rather the international segment of the city) without being "integrated into a country"? Being a service user or consumer may stand for integration only from an economic point of view. The question should be approached in abstraction from a political discourse, without any "should" or "should not integrate".

2.3.6. Integration of EU officials in Brussels

In terms of integration, the situation of EU civil servants seems to be even more complicated than that of ordinary "expats" in Brussels. This is related to several factors, one of which is that by contrast with most of the "expatriates", many EU officials have life-long contracts that bind them to the new country of settlement. Thus, it can be assumed that they have much stronger incentives to adapt and integrate. Undoubtedly, another important factor is the location of the EU institutions and the strong European presence in the city. As described by, *inter alia,* Shore (2000) and Bellier (2002), they are strongly embedded in their work-related environment. This specific process of *engrenage* (or "enmeshing") is here understood as "a mechanism of institutional and ideological incorporation" (Shore 2000:148). It favours a

strong sense of community amongst the EU employees, a common lifestyle, and some specific "rituals".[68]

Suvarierol believes the EU officials prize the multinational, pluri-cultural character of Brussels (2009:424-5; see also Cailliez 2004:63) which facilitates their integration into the international strata of the city, as expatriates are open to new acquaintances (Suvarierol 2009:425). On the other hand, as the author states after Cailliez (2004), some of them "never feel at home in Brussels", perceiving it merely as a place of work (2009:425).

Indeed, it is frequently assumed, that the EU civil servants do not integrate with the host society (Shore 2000:162). Favell argues that the perception of their unwillingness to "integrate into Belgian life" is, in fact, at the origin of the majority of negative stereotypes concerning them (2008a:54). While explaining the specific context in which the EU officials evolve in Brussels, Shore emphasizes the importance of "the social and geographical setting in which the Commission is located" (2000:153), while Favell refers to anti-European resentments among the local population, due, *inter alia*, to rising property prices (2005:13).

The Eurocrats and the Belgians "live side by side but in separate worlds" (Suvarierol 2009:425; see also Abélès et al. 1993:23; Shore 2000:162; Cailliez 2004:55, 83). Rudi Janssens explains this limited contact with the local population by the fact that EU officials "came to Brussels with a specific assignment that guaranteed employment" and have insignificant professional contact with Belgians both as colleagues and customers (as the institutions are "not part of the local economy") (2008:433). Furthermore, they are segregated in space, as they settle in the same areas close to foreign schools (Janssens 2008: 433, 418).

Cailliez draws attention to a somewhat related factor, linked to seclusion from the host society, notably the existence of spaces and a specific infrastructure reserved specifically for the employees of EU institutions and their families and aimed at the facilitation of the process

[68] The concept of *engrenage* will be developed in a forthcoming chapter.

of moving to Belgium (e.g., kindergartens, international schools, and sport and cultural centres) (2004:23). Indeed, as Janssens observes, EU officials develop their personal networks via clubs and associations (2008:427). As Cailliez argues, "all these activities, associations or infrastructure" are at the basis of evolving in parallel to the host society (2004:55). At the same time, this parallel world does not prevent them from exploiting the other resources of Brussels (e.g., cinemas, commercial centres, bars and restaurants, sport clubs, museums, music festivals, etc.) (Cailliez 2004:55).

2.4. Expatriates and EU officials in the host society

The literature on highly skilled mobile professionals and the strategies they use in the host environment is relevant for the subject of my study, as my research group (as it will be explained) shares many characteristics with this category of mobile individuals (that I will refer to as expatriates). However, they also differ on several respects from, usually "sedentarised", employees of the EU institutions. I will therefore complement the picture with the existing literature dedicated, more specifically, to EU officials.

2.4.1. Creation and manipulation of "social boundaries" in the expatriate world

Anne-Meike Fechter stresses the importance of boundaries in shaping expatriates' lives abroad and their contacts with the local population (2007a:35, 37; 2007b:17). Fechter suggests that corporate expatriates are "externally bounded", however, as she stresses, these boundaries not only separate them from the local environment, but also divide the expatriate world internally (2007a:37). As she notes, expatriates deliberately erect, maintain, and use boundaries and modify spaces so as to distance themselves from the country they live in, in this case, Indonesia (Fechter 2007a:37; 2007b:26).[69] Expatriates themselves often employ

[69] Fechter observes that the older expats with family usually try to reproduce their national ways of life, while "young professionals seem to aspire to more international, 'global' lifestyles" (2007b:129). As she explains,

such metaphors as living in a "bubble", "bunker", "ghetto", "hothouse", "golden cage", or in a "Disneyland" to describe their situation (Fechter 2007a: 37-38; see also 2007b:41, 151-152). Fechter also refers to Favell (2003b:401, 423; 2004) who argues that privileged "migrants" can also be the victims of boundaries imposed on them by the host society (Fechter 2007b:23-24, 26; see also 2007a:34-35).

The expatriate "bubble" embraces not only their social contacts but also spatial arrangements (Fechter 2007b:73) which are one of the examples of the premeditated use of boundaries.

2.4.2. Within the boundaries: the social life of expatriates

In the academic literature, expatriate communities are often pictured as "socially self-sufficient and isolated" (E. Cohen 1977:60), or metaphorically referred to as "living in a bubble" (see e.g., Butcher 2009:1362; E. Cohen 1977:57; Farrer 2010:1224; Fechter 2007a:47; 2007b:41, 151; Leonard 2010a:72). Manuel Castells describes corporate elites as creating homogenous and distinctive communities, disembedded from the local population (2010 [1996]:446-447). National expatriate communities create their own "communal services and organizations" such as different associations, clubs, schools, and religious institutions that help them live as if they had never left home (E. Cohen 1977:36-37; see also Coles and Walsh 2010; Fechter 2007a, 2007b; Leonard 2010b, 2010a). As Jonathan V. Beaverstock notes, the social networking between expatriates is particularly important in the early period shortly after arrival (2002:535).

Pauline Leonard claims that the workplace is often "the first point of entry to the new

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"family expatriates", tend to live in a kind of social 'bubble', separating them from both local population and other communities of expats, and their social circles are restricted to co-nationals (Fechter 2007b:128), while "young global professionals" usually socialise with other expats, although still remain separated from the local population (Fechter 2007b:10, 129). Fechter adds yet another category, notably, "non-corporate expatriates", who decided to come on their own initiative, often out of the interest in the local culture and people (2007b:140). These expatriates avoid being closed in any "bubble", usually seek contact with the locals, while their lifestyles often do not differ from those of the Indonesians (Fechter 2007b: 140-142).

life", and, as such, significantly affects the "social and personal relations and identities" of newcomers (2010a:3; see also Beaverstock 2005:261).[70] Beaverstock's research on British expatriates employed in international financial centres in Singapore has concluded that they tend to maintain contacts with other expatriates of all nationalities while avoiding contact with local (in this case) Singaporeans (2002:532-534). Beaverstock points out that the boundaries between work and the private sphere are blurred, as expatriates use membership of formalised business associations, various sport clubs, sport venues, and events as "key sites" to build their networks for business purposes (2002:534-536; see also Fechter 2007b:69). Interestingly, the research conducted by the same scholar on British inter-company transferees in New York has shown that (with the exception of young single newcomers)[71] it was only at the beginning of their stay abroad that they were encapsulated in "work-related 'expatriate cliques'" (Beaverstock 2005:261). With time, networking activities focused on the surrounding environment of their place of residence and also embraced British nationals from outside their work (Beaverstock 2005:266).

Melissa Butcher (2009), studying Australians in Asia, has shown that the social networks of mobile professionals (again, especially at the beginning of their stay abroad) mostly tend to include other work colleagues, although not necessarily of the same nationality (2009:1361). In fact, belonging to the same cultural group and ease of communication were found to be more integrative factors than nationality (Butcher 2009:1360, 1361).

Several authors have traced certain common characteristics of social network formation outside of the sphere strictly designated for work (e.g., Beaverstock 2002, 2005, 2011; Fechter 2007a, 2007b; Klekowski von Koppenfels 2014). In the case of those expats who had moved abroad together with their families, social networks were often established through

[70] The workplace plays an important role when it regards establishing social contacts with the members of a local population (Butcher 2009:1359).

[71] Beaverstock observed that "singles" living outside of the expatriate enclaves found it "difficult to forge friendships beyond the workplace", mainly because of long working hours (2005:263).

children[72] (e.g., via school related activities) or spouses (Beaverstock 2002:535; 2005:262; see also Klekowski von Koppenfels 2014:100-105), and were often restricted to their own national group (Beaverstock 2005:262; Fechter 2007b:105). Likewise, in the context of UN professionals researched by Magdalena Nowicka and Ramin Kaweh, international schools were perceived as places where new acquaintances could be made (2009:61).

Several authors also point at the important role of expatriate clubs (e.g., Coles and Walsh 2010:1322; Leonard 2010a:81; 2010b:1255; Beaverstock 2011:716; Cohen 1977:41) "in structuring the social fabric" in the expatriate context (Leonard 2010b:1255), which, according to Coles and Walsh, provide an opportunity for like-minded people to meet and be in a familiar cultural context (2010:1323).

2.4.3. Across the boundaries: "expatriates' spaces"

Expatriates' seclusion in space[73] is not limited to housing in distinct expatriate neighbourhoods, but extends to the aforementioned social clubs, international schools for children, wives' associations, bars, night-clubs, restaurants, and sport clubs (Beaverstock 2002:534-537; 2011:712, 715-716, 719; Butcher 2009:1362; E. Cohen 1977:16, 57; Coles and Walsh 2010:1322-1323; Farrer 2010:1224; Fechter 2007a, 2007b; Leonard 2010a:81; 2010b:1255). As David Ley observes, "the foreshortened time and space create a circumscribed lifeworld around work, bars, and sporting and expatriate clubs" (2004:157). James Farrer remarks that in the context of Western expatriates in Shanghai, "living in the expat 'village' could involve a social whirlwind that left little time for other activities, including socialising with 'locals'" (2010:1224). Butcher suggests that for the majority of expatriates, the local people would rather belong to a category of "acquaintances" than close friends (2009:1361).

[72] The role of children's activities in establishing social ties with the local population was emphasized also by Hyvönen (2008:428).
[73] The concept of space is explained in subsection 2.5.2.

The reasons for this situation are multiple: on the expatriates' side, they relate in particular to their lack of cultural competence (Butcher 2009:1360; E. Cohen 1977:57; Kennedy 2009:26; Li et al. 1995:351) and the temporary character of their presence (E. Cohen 1977:57; Amit 2007:9; Butcher 2009:1359; Favell 2008a:49; Gatti 2009:5; Kennedy 2009: 26-27), and on the local side to the impermeability of their existing networks and social structures (Kennedy 2009:27). As Butcher suggests, the difficulty of setting up more meaningful relations with the host society was particularly due to the attitude of the locals, who perceived expatriates as transient (2009:1359), but also from "the awareness of difference" and a "lack of shared cultural frames of reference and meaning" (2009:1360).

Coles and Walsh argue that separation from the local society is actually wanted by both groups (2010:1323). Nowicka and Kaweh observe that poor language skills can be one of the reasons why the social networks of (UN) international professionals are limited to other internationals (2009:61; see also Coles and Walsh 2010:1330; Kennedy 2009:26; Li et al. 1995:351).

2.4.4. Social life of expats in Brussels

The actual level and target of (social) integration of members of an incoming group can be best observed through their socialising practices. These practices are very much about erecting and crossing boundaries. As such, they are an essential element of building or accessing communities.

Cailliez emphasizes the importance of socialising practices between foreigners, especially at the initial phase of their stay abroad (2004:24) which she perceives as easier for linguistic reasons, but also offering the possibility of exchange on expat-life-related topics of common interest (such as solitude, cultural differences, and separation from families and friends who stayed in the home country) (Cailliez 2004:82). Favell observes that expatriate

networks are an important source of information as regards housing, new friends, and new opportunities (2008a:78). Based on his research, he adds that few EU expats[74] reported acquaintances or participation in important social networks outside of their compatriots or other foreigners, except for those who intermarry (2003b:418).

The situation of Brussels expats caught in "an expat bubble" can be seen, in certain regards, as corresponding to the clichés about "foreign expats in big cities" living in "quasi-colonial national ghettos" (using the expression of Favell 2008a:122-123; on the latter see also E. Cohen 1977:8; Fechter 2007b:2, 27-29, 2010; Fechter and Walsh 2010). Indeed, as Emanuele Gatti observes, Brussels expatriates are often presented as separated from Belgians by "invisible barriers" and hence having limited contacts with them (2009:5).

Favell states that foreign affluent residents hardly ever enter Belgian social networks in Brussels (2008a:123). Very few of them have many "local" (non-expatriate) friends outside the work context, while they find the international network to be strong and supportive (Favell 2008a:123). By contrast, Cailliez argues that, with time, the boundaries of their social networks can be extended and progressively also come to include people from the host society (2004:24). Favell suggests that international networks may include especially those local people who had also lived abroad (2008a:123). Out of several different factors leading to the alienation of Brussels expatriates from Belgians, the reasons for which lay on both sides (Cailliez 2004), Cailliez distinguishes a few that can be ascribed specifically to expatriates. She argues that it is the fact that they have a lot in common, as they are all uprooted and have similar experiences, that brings expatriates together and generates their mutual support (Cailliez 2004:84). However, this tendency to seek out people in a similar situation does not have to be triggered by the desire to separate from Belgians (2004:82-83). Another important factor is separation in space, notably the existence of a specific infrastructure (e.g.,

[74] Favell (2008a) refers to "Eurostars", a notion slightly larger than "EU expats", covering all EU individuals attracted to a host country by "pull factors", thus also e.g., students.

international schools, sport centres) and spaces that are reserved for expats (*lieux réservés*, e.g., associations, clubs)[75] (2004: 23, 51; see also Calay and Magosse 2008:495). Indeed, some of the expatriates continue to live in accordance with the habits they had in their country of origin, actively participating in events of the expatriate community in Brussels, be they related to sport, theatre, or other free time activities (Cailliez 2004:51, 81-82).

On the other hand, this separation is also due to certain "features" and the attitude of the host society, often based on negative stereotypes (Cailliez 2004:85-87). Besides, the local people (who have grown in Brussels) already have their established social networks (families and friends) and are not interested in establishing new contacts (Cailliez 2004:85; see also Abélès et al. 1993:23; Shore 2000:162; Suvarierol 2009:425). This is also partly related to the transient (in the case of "true" expats) character of their stay and the consequent lack of interest in "invest[ing] emotionally" in contacts with people who are set to leave in a short while (Gatti 2009:5).

Moreover, such contacts between Belgians and expats are made even more difficult by the frequent unwillingness of the latter to learn any of the official local languages (i.e. French and Dutch), which is also due to the short perspective of their stay in Belgium[76] (Gatti 2009:4). In consequence, expats' social relations are often restricted to other expatriates (Gatti 2009:5).

[75] There are expat-oriented websites with a rich list of different activities; there are clubs and associations (often oriented towards one national or linguistic group) that aim at the creation of social networks especially for newcomers (proposing e.g., language classes, or various hobby oriented courses) (Cailliez 2004:51). There are also monthly, international social events (Cailliez 2004:51) or other cultural or hobby related activities (e.g., gardening photography, dance, sport) (Cailliez 2004:52). Moreover, the expats have their national shops, pubs (located close to the European institutions), bookshops, diverse expat-oriented magazines and brochures (e.g., The Bulletin, the Newcomer, the Expat Directory, The Expat Survival Guide) (Cailliez 2004:54-55).

[76] Again, this will apply to most expats, but usually not to EU officials.

2.4.5. Socialising practices and spatial encapsulation of EU officials

The socialising practices of EU officials partly follow the patterns observed with the expatriates in Brussels and other international cities. However, they present important specificities due, notably, to their attachment to the institutions which pervade their lives.

2.4.5.1. Work-time social networks in Brussels: national or multinational?

As has already been emphasized, one of the important differences between the EU institutions' employees and other categories of expats is the permanent character of their stay abroad. This circumstance may influence the shape of their social life since it may serve as an incentive to build long-lasting non-work-related friendships (Suvarierol 2009:414).

The research performed by Shore demonstrates that the EU officials are totally immersed in the EU institutions' universe, as they spend most of their time within the confines of the EU buildings, concentrate on EU matters, and mostly socialise with other EU officials (2000:163). Therefore, the EU institutions and work colleagues constitute an important point of departure in looking for new acquaintances (see e.g., Cailliez 2004:81). Some of them consider their co-workers "a second family" (Cailliez 2004:81). According to Suvarierol, the multinational character of the European Commission and its structure do not favour national attachments (2008:702). Bellier confirms that the nationality of the staff is irrelevant as regards "the formation of the working teams, which are typically multinational" (2002:87; see also Ban 2013:33; Suvarierol 2008:709, 714). Such a view is not, however, shared by all researchers. Even Shore concedes that some organizational divisions are known for being "strongholds for particular nationalities and regional minorities" (2000:190; see also Hooghe 2001:105).

2.4.5.2. Nationality and socialising practices of the employees of the EU institutions

As Shore contends, outside the work context, the social relations of EU officials tend to be less transnational and, in fact, the most lasting private networks are those based on national or linguistic grounds (Shore 2000:164; see also Abélès 2004:7-8; Abélès et al. 1993:22; Suvarierol 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011). Suvarierol insists on a separation between the work and private contacts of EU officials (2009:412), the former being truly international while their leisure networks[77] are often formed based on nationality or language, even though they are rarely of a purely national character (2007:154, 157-158; see also Suvarierol 2009:427-431; 2011:194). National networks are particularly important in the case of newcomers as they facilitate entry into the new environment while offering opportunities for social insertion and assistance in solving practical problems (Suvarierol 2007:152; 2009:421). However, access to such networks is not always automatic and requires active network building (Suvarierol 2009:414). Another reason for maintaining contacts within one's own national group is to provide opportunities for children to practice their mother tongue (Suvarierol 2009:428). The European Schools in which the children of most Eurocrats are enrolled are perceived as "the hub of contacts with parents from the same nationality" (Suvarierol 2009:428-429).

Bellier explains that the stress related to the complexity of the working environment brings EU officials to seek comfort in national solidarities (2000a:146). Stevens and Stevens argue that every nationality groups around a specific establishment (church, club or cafés, bars, sport clubs, etc.) (2001:132-133; see also Abélès et al. 1993:22; Cailliez 2004:55). However, not all officials feel the need to participate in such institutionalized networking (Abélès et al. 1993:22). Importantly, as Stevens and Stevens emphasize, these networks sometimes embrace people from outside the EU institutions such as the staff of Permanent

[77] Similarly as leisure networks, also career networks are "more susceptible to be predominantly national" (Suvarierol 2007:157).

Representations of member states to the EU, NATO, diplomats, expatriates working in private companies, law firms, and other organizations (Stevens and Stevens 2001:133). At the same time, the authors observe that these networks "are not necessarily altogether mononational" (Stevens and Stevens 2001:133).

Networks can also be based on regional grounds (as in the case of the officials of new member states) or simply on the ground of belonging to the same age group and the same situation of being a newcomer (Suvarierol 2009:421-422). This is especially the case for those EU officials who had prior experience of living abroad or were raised in multinational families (Suvarierol 2009:426). Their networks tend to be mixed, including both national and multinational components (Suvarierol 2009:426; see also Suvarierol 2007:151).

2.4.5.3. Free time networking vs. work time networking: separation or continuum?

Amy Busby suggests that in Brussels,

> work and private lives blur because people come to Brussels to work and then establish many of their friendships through their work place, and therefore socialise with friends regularly in the nearby places after work and at networking events, but do so in work clothes and discuss work issues and relationships with colleagues, so boundaries quickly become blurred. (Busby 2011:15)

In fact, it is argued that informal meetings (at receptions, cocktail bars, and clubs) may also turn some colleagues into friends, and the role of such meetings goes beyond the exchange of professional information and is considered crucial for their "insertion into Europe" (Bellier 2000b:62). Liesbet Hooghe points to the important role of the Commission's cafeteria, where officials, often from a national circle, discuss politics, share their frustrations, flirt, or exchange "culturally tinged pleasantries" (2001:168). At the same time, private gatherings frequently share space with work-related ones, as cafeteria also host informal work meetings (Hooghe 2001:168). Abélès et al. observe that "considerable socializing takes place at work and outside: units lay on breakfast or drinks; arrivals, departures, job changes are always celebrated; ... staff invite each other to dinner and the children play together" (1993:9).

This picture is not confirmed in the analysis of the social networks of European Commission officials performed by Suvarierol, who instead claims that, contrary to the aforementioned findings, the private and professional lives of EU officials tend to be rather separated (2009:412, 424).

2.4.5.4. The EU officials and the Belgians

Several scholars contend that the contact of EU officials with Belgians (except for those employed in the EU institutions) is extremely limited (Shore 2000:162; Abélès et al. 1993:21, 23; Cailliez 2004:82-83; Suvarierol 2009:425) and mostly restricted to everyday administrative or commercial transactions (Cailliez 2004:82; Shore 2000:162). The EU officials who have any greater contact are usually those married to local people (Suvarierol 2009:425; Cailliez 2004:83). Indeed, EU officials are mostly focused on the expatriate community, and even for those who were able to establish contacts with Belgians, these were not really close friendships (Cailliez 2004:83).

Their immersion in the EU "reality" and detachment from the local social life may, according to Shore, be associated with their diplomatic privileges, higher salaries, and specific settlement patterns (2000:162). As Shore observes, if the EU officials are detached from the life conditions of the majority of Belgians, it is also as a result of their "institutional lifestyle" (2000:6, 162). Their long working hours in addition to weekend trips outside Brussels make it very difficult to encounter Belgians on a daily basis (Shore 2000:162).

This situation is similar to what was reported as regards expatriates in Brussels. However, there are some additional reasons which are typical only of the employees of the EU institutions that may lead to their separation from the local population. Perceived as being "amongst the most privileged public officials in world" (Shore 2000:193; on the alleged privileges of EU officials - see also Bellier 2002:88), European civil servants are exempted

from Belgian income tax and they are thought to have not only very high salaries and allowances, but also other bonuses - "all of these were cited as possible explanations for local resentment" (Abélès et al. 1993:23; see also Cailliez 2004:87). Stereotypes about EU officials have real consequences, since they reinforce their feeling of alienation.

2.4.5.5. Eurocrat enclaves in Brussels?

As with other expats in Brussels (*supra*), EU officials are often perceived as trapped in a social and spatial "bubble" (Shore 2000). Several authors draw attention to the spatial enclaves of EU officials (and other categories of expatriates) in the residential neighbourhoods of Brussels (see e.g., Shore 2000:161-162; Calay and Magosse 2008:485; or Cailliez 2004:41), described by Bellier as posh, green districts of the city (2002:78). Shore (2002:162) and Favell (2008a:55) call these areas "euro-ghetto",[78] Suvarierol refers to them very briefly as "EU ghettos" (2007:151; 2009:425), while Calliez writes about "golden ghettos" or "European ghettos" ("*des 'ghettos dorés'*" or "*des 'ghettos européens'*")[79] (2004:41).

While looking into the settlement patterns of British EU officials, Cailliez observes that, usually, newcomers would first look for temporary accommodation in the European quarter in hotels, "appart-hotels", or with friends in order to have the time to look for a place to stay (2004:31). After the initial period, they would usually choose places in proximity to their offices, often in the European district (Schuman area) which gathers the international population of the employees of the EU institutions and offers them a variety of restaurants and pubs of different foreign "origins" (Cailliez 2004: 31, 34-35).

The proximity of certain infrastructure (e.g., shops, entertainment, night-life, and

[78] Given that this term carries a strong association with excluded, stigmatised groups, I will use this term only while quoting other scholars or research participants.
[79] However, Cailliez suggests that "*ghettos dorés*", "*ghettos européens*" do not really exist, but "they are rather a part of the collective imaginary" (2004:41).

public transport) and distance to the office and schools[80] are the most important factors influencing their accommodation choices (Cailliez 2004:38). However, such factors as atmosphere, acquaintances, and other officials in the EU institutions or EU foreigners living in the neighbourhood also influenced accommodation choices (Cailliez 2004:39-40). By contrast, some others intentionally choose *communes* not popular amongst the EU staff in order to live amongst Belgians (Cailliez 2004:40).

After some time, the importance of proximity to work diminishes (Cailliez 2004:40) and young officials usually move to the so-called *communes de seconde urbanisation* (Auderghem, Uccle, Watermael-Boitsfort, Woluwé-St-Lambert or Woluwé-St-Pierre) or peripheral areas of Brussels, which are also popular among well-off Belgians (Cailliez 2004:32). This movement often follows changes at the family level (e.g., marriage, having children) (Cailliez 2004:32).

Undoubtedly, the aforementioned "spatial enclavement" is partly due to the fact that the Directorate General in which one is employed is also the first place of socialization for a newcomer (Bellier 2002:86),[81] and that the Eurocrats are totally immersed in the universe of the EU institutions, spending most of their time within the EU buildings (Shore 2000:163). Indeed, Cailliez stresses that over-representation of the EU officials in certain neighbourhoods is related to the strategies of looking for accommodation based on the use of social networks (2004:41).

2.5. Identification and its bases

Anita Jacobson-Widding observes that the term "identity" may refer to many different elements, such as for instance "ethnic stereotype, ... social commonality, personal integrity,

[80] The proximity of school infrastructure is one of the most important factors (Cailliez 2004:41; Suvarierol 2009:425; 2007:151): British schools have attracted Brits to Tervuren and Waterloo, a German school is credited for high concentration of Germans in Wezembeek-Oppem (Janssens 2008:418-419).

[81] Expatriate newcomers are often advised already at their arrival in Brussels by other, long-established expatriates and estate agencies to avoid areas inhabited by the low-skilled migrants (Gatti 2009:3).

temporal continuity, cultural heritage, and so on" (1983:13). As proposed by James A. Caporaso, it "can be seen as self-conception rooted in society, a sense of who we are in relation to others" (2005:66; see also Shore 1996:487-488; 2000:63; Shore and Black 1994:293).

Richard Jenkins suggests that identity is not "some*thing* that simply *is*" (2008b:17), but a "practical accomplishment, a process" (2008b:46; see also Góra and Mach 2010:9), "becoming", involving reflexivity and social interactions (2008b:17; see also Bauman 2004b:15-16; Easthope 2009:61-67; Hall 1996:4). In Stuart Hall's approach, identity is conceived as something in constant construction "using the resources of history, language and culture" (Hall 1996:4). As Sztompka puts it, "people 'craft themselves', rather than receiving themselves ready-made", and he claims that "identity has become multi-dimensional, multi-layered, differentiated" (2004:493-494). Similarly, Bauman emphasizes that "'belonging' and 'identity' are not cut in rock, ... they are not secured by a lifelong guarantee, ... they are eminently negotiable and revocable" (2004b:11).[82]

Jenkins argues that identity requires classification of things or persons and association to some of these things, and not of others (2008b:17). The author claims that "the notion of identity involves two criteria of comparison between persons or things: *similarity* and *difference*" (Jenkins 2008b:17; see also 2002:117; 2008a:14; Jacobson-Widding 1983:13; Sztompka 2004:483-484; Pratt 1999:156). Thus, to a significant extent, identity is about the distinction of collectivities and individuals from others with whom they interact (Jenkins 2008b:18).[83]

An important characteristic of identities is their "contextual character" (Jenkins 2002:121-122; 1997:63), and thus the fact that identity is "specific to a given social and

[82] Bauman observes that the main identity problem experienced by people today is how to "keep the options open" (1996:18) and which of the numerous possible identities to choose (Bauman 2004b:84).
[83] Hall claims that "identities are constructed through, not outside, difference" (1996:5). Likewise, according to Easthope, "people's identities are in part constituted by their definitions of what they are not and by the creation of (physical and mental) borders or boundaries around their identities" (2009:68).

historical setting" (Shore 1993a:36). Jenkins (1997) points out that identity is an outcome of social interaction (see also Góra and Mach 2010:15), and the latter is "always situated in context" (Jenkins 1997:63).

Hall claims that identities are "constructed within … discourse" and "arise from the narrativization of the self" (1996:4). Finally, Gerard Delanty and Chris Rumford suggest that identity is "a mode of self-understanding that is expressed by people in ongoing narratives and situations" (2005:52).

2.5.1. The notion of identification

Identification is "a social process", the "product" of which is identity (Jenkins 2002:118). However, "identity" itself is not a stable, finished product, but its content is not more than a process itself, and thus replacing "identity" with "identification" does not make a huge difference, except that the latter term better fits its processual, open-ended nature (Jenkins 2008b:14).

Jenkins observes that identities are produced in the "dialectic of collective identification, in the interplay of group identification and categorisation" (2008b:111). These two notions correspond, respectively, to the "internal and external moments of the process of collective identification" (Jenkins 2008b:157). As Jenkins explains, "a group is a self-conscious collectivity, rooted in processes of internal definition, while a category is externally defined" (1997:54).

With regard to the relation between categorisation and identification, Jenkins observes that identification may happen partly through the categorization of others, but equally categorization by others affects one's internal definition, either directly or in reaction to such categorization (1997:57). Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper emphasize the distinction between "self-identification" and "the identification and categorization of oneself by others",

with a particular focus on categorization by "powerful, authoritative institutions", including the state or other bureaucracies and firms (2000:15-16). Karmela Liebkind distinguishes between "empathetic identification" (neutral acknowledgment of certain similarities without value judgement) and "idealistic identification" involving evaluation and the aspiration to be alike (1983:189). Liebkind explains that, in certain cases, acknowledgment of similarities may conflict with the negative valuation of the characteristics of the others (1983:189). Liebkind also suggests that "new identifications develop through identity aspirations, in which idealistic identification with specific people or groups of people induces the individual to empathize with them" (1983:189).

Jenkins distinguishes "ascribed identification" and "achieved" (or "acquired") identifications (2008b:172).[84] The former is "constructed on the basis of the contingencies of birth", while the latter are "assumed during the subsequent life-course", by choice or otherwise (Jenkins 2008b:172).

Jenkins' understanding of identity and identification largely corresponds to the sense in which I will refer to this concept in this dissertation. In particular, I will not attach excessive importance to the difference between identification and identity, as the latter is simply a result of the former. In this thesis, however, I will try to avoid the notion of identity, since it may be perceived by some anthropologists as too "essentializing" and thus not flexible and fluid enough.

2.5.2. Identity, space and place-making in the mobility context

According to Tim Cresswell, "place is how we make the world meaningful and how we experience the world …, a space invested with meaning" (2008:12; see also Cresswell

[84] Drawing upon Linton (1936) and Merton (1957).

2002:12; 2006:3; Lawrence 2009:360).[85] For the author, it is "the raw material for the creative production of identity" (2008:39). It can refer to a country, a city, a district, a bar, a house, to anything, which is characterised by a "location" ("a site in space"), "locales" (thus the "settings" structuring the social interaction) and a "sense of place", a particular relationship between the aforementioned and an individual (Agnew 2011:326-327).

If geographers usually distinguish "raw" spaces from places understood as spaces with meaning attached (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2012:14), some authors refer to "social space" or socially produced space, with the meaning close to the aforementioned definition of place (Lefebvre 1991; Smith 1991 in: Cresswell 2008:10). Christopher Tilley distinguishes an "abstract" approach to space from a "humanised" approach where space (he prefers to speak about "spaces") is socially constructed and can be understood as existing only together with human agency and in the context of human relations (1994:10-17). Referring to the phenomenological approach, among different types of spaces, the author quotes existential space, "constructed in the concrete experiences of individuals socialized within a group" (Tilley 1994:16). Existential spaces are structured notably by boundaries "in and between places" (1994:16). In this context, Tilley understands places as "foci for the production of meaning, intention and purpose of societal significance" (1994:16). As regards the relation between "space" and "place", he also quotes Relph (1976) who sees this relation as interdependent: space would "provide a situational context for places", yet, at the same time would draw its meaning from places (Tilley 1994:15). This understanding of the notion of "space" has influenced Fechter (2007b) when she described space making practices of expatriates in Jakarta. It is also in this meaning that I will refer to "spaces" and "places" in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

Jung-Sun Park remarks that "home" does not necessarily need to be "grounded on a

[85] Agnew (2011) observes that the notions of "place" and "space" are sometimes used with a reversed meaning, notably by de Certeau (1984). Moreover, they are not always clearly distinguished in the literature (ibid.:318).

territory", and that "its tangibility is weakened" (2004:298). Similarly, Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson observe that we live in a world where identities are becoming "differently territorialized" or even "deterritorialized" (1992:9). Nina Glick Schiller and Noel B. Salazar suggest that "identities and loyalties could be understood as products of social relations rather than of fixed relationships to territory" (2012:4; see also Gupta and Ferguson 1997:7). However, other authors insist that "residential practices" are still of paramount importance for identification (Butler and Robson 2003; Savage et al. 2005 in: Benson and Jackson 2012:795). According to Hazel Easthope, identification with places helps to establish one's own "sense of self" in opposition to other places and other people in these places (2009:73).

Spatial mobility necessarily entails abandoning of places and hence the need to re-create them as imaginaries or to make new places. With this regard, the experience of Polish EU officials is partly the experience of any mobile European. Easthope contends that, despite the shift of identities towards hybridity and mobility, "attachment to place must exist in some form and must impact our identities so long as we exist as beings with bodies" (2009:66). Migrants also tend to "reconfigure" the place of origin in the new place out of their memories, "both figuratively and imaginatively" (Tolia-Kelly 2006, in: Hannam et al. 2006:10). Indeed, drawing on examples from Harvey (1996), Cresswell stresses that places are produced, made by people, they are "continually … socially constructed" (2008:57; see also Ferguson and Gupta 1992:17; Harvey 1993:25). Re-creating places by migrants serves preservation or construction of identity, as a "locus of collective memory" (Harvey1996 as cited in: Cresswell 2008:61). David Harvey sees it as an attempt "to recover a viable homeland" by "the recovery of roots", links with the past (1993:11). In the same time, the construction of place does not necessarily need to relate to memories of the past. As Doreen Massey suggests, a place "is constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus" (1994:154).

If we assume that identity is a fluid and negotiable[86] category (Eriksen 2010; Bauman 1996, 2004b; Easthope 2009), migration is an opportunity for "re-defining oneself and moving from ascribed identities", especially through new interpersonal relations (Easthope 2009:69). In the case of my study, the identities of my research participants are strongly influenced by the changing context (e.g., their expatriation, relations with different groups, *engrenage*, etc.).

2.5.3. Ethnicity: theoretical considerations

Although, there are many different interpretations and approaches in anthropology towards ethnicity, Eriksen suggests that they all have to do with the "*classification of people* and *group relationships*" (2010:5, emphasis in original). If the term is often used in everyday language with reference to minority groups, scholars emphasize that in anthropological studies it is employed in a larger context (Eriksen 2010:5; 2015:330; Castles and Miller 2003:33), referring to every individual (Castles and Miller 2003:33) and dealing with relationships between culturally distinctive groups (Eriksen 2010:5; 2015:330).

Fredrik Barth remarked that the notion of ethnicity is used in relation to groups sharing identity, history, and cultural heritage (1998 [1969]:5). However, he emphasizes that ethnicity is mostly about "social organization" rather than about "cultural differences", the latter being used as signs, "diacritica", serving to draw and maintain boundaries and distinguish those who are alike from those who are different (Barth 1998 [1969]:6). Scholars are unanimous that ethnicity "requires a sense of belonging and an awareness of boundaries between members and nonmembers" (Enloe 1996:197; see also Eriksen 2010:96). Eriksen also stresses the relational character of ethnicity, which he argues should be thought of as a relationship "between and not within groups" (2010:69; 2015:332). The author insists that

[86] Brubaker and Cooper argue that "stipulating that identities are constructed, fluid and multiple – leaves us without a rationale for talking about 'identities' at all" (2000:1).

"group identities must always be defined in relation to that which they are not" (2010:14; see also Amit 2002a:44). As he contends, cultural differences between such groups matter only to the extent that they are perceived as important and hence are at the origin of a perception of another group as culturally different (Eriksen 2010:16). Consequently, Eriksen stresses that ethnicity is "constituted through social contact" (2010:23, see also Roland Cohen 1978:386-387). By contrast, Anthony P. Cohen contests the view that ethnicity is mainly contrastive and that boundaries are situational, and describes ethnicity as "a mode of action and of representation", referring to a symbolic depiction or self-depiction in terms of cultural identity, made on the basis of symbols borrowed from everyday life (1998:23-25).

Leman, referring to other scholars, proposes the following, inclusive approach to ethnicity:

> With ethnicity, we mean, (1), a "subjective, symbolic or emblematic use … of any aspect of culture, in order to differentiate … from other groups" (Brass 1991:19), (2), on the basis of "a feeling of continuity with the past, a feeling that is maintained as an essential part of one's self-definition" (De Vos 1975:17), (3) providing "reservoirs for renewing humane values. Ethnic memory is thus future, not past, oriented" (Fischer 1986:176), and (4) whereby it is not "the cultural stuff that it encloses" that fundamentally decides what is involved in the we-consciousness but "the ethnic boundary that defines the group" (Barth 1969:15). Ethnic frontiers are social frontiers. (2000:147)

Leman proposes that we should approach ethnicity as "we-consciousness" "based on a supposed common past that is not shared with one's neighbours" (2000:9). Importantly, he stresses the importance of making a distinction between two categories of ethnicity, notably, "indigenous and immigrant ethnicities" (Leman 2000:10), where the former focuses on boundary creation with reference to the distant past and the latter refers to "the near past (at most, three generations deep)" (Leman 2000:20).

Eriksen refers to the studies of the Chicago School demonstrating a fluid, negotiable, and situational character of ethnic relations (2010:26). According to their insights, ethnic identities may be subject to deliberate manipulation (Eriksen 2010:26). Ethnic membership may vary according to the social context (Eriksen 2010:25). Park (1955 [1921]) suggested

that an "individual may have many 'selves' according to the groups to which he belongs and the extent to which each of these groups is isolated from the others" (as cited in Eriksen 2010:25-26). Jenkins also claims that "ethnicity is *always* socially constructed" (2008a:49).

On the other hand, De Vos insists on "the need for a psychological or emic approach to ethnic identity", arguing that the latter "cannot be defined by behavioral criteria alone", but "is determined by what one feels about oneself" (1995:25).

Caroline B. Brettell (2003, 2008) refers to three theoretical approaches to ethnicity which are encountered in anthropological studies, namely "primordialist", "instrumentalist", and "situational",[87] the latter two being particularly useful for studying situations of migration (Brettell 2008:132; see also 2003:106-107). In short, as Brettell states,

> the primordialist approach, which prevailed until the 1960s, argues that ethnic identity is the result of deep-rooted attachments to group and culture; the instrumentalist approach focuses on ethnicity as a political strategy that is pursued for pragmatic interests; and the situational approach, emerging from the theoretical work of Frederik Barth (1969), emphasizes the fluidity and contingency of ethnic identity, which is constructed in specific historical and social contexts (Banks 1996). (2003:106; 2008:131-132)

Castles and Miller note that the concept of "situational" ethnicity (particularly relevant to the present research) implies that members "'invoke' ethnicity, as a criterion for self-identification, in a situation where such identification is necessary or useful" (2003:33-4; see also Jenkins 2008a:49; Eriksen 2015:334).

Anthony D. Smith defines an "ethnic group" as a type of community distinguished by "a specific sense of solidarity and honour, and a set of shared symbols and values" (1981:65). Similarly, Eriksen observes that ethnic groups "have myths of common origin", and adds that they often "have ideologies encouraging endogamy" (2010:17). According to Paul R. Brass, ethnic groups can be defined with reference to "objective attributes" (such as language, dress, custom, religion, or race), "subjective feelings", or "behaviour" (1991:18). Ethnic groups

[87] While also quoting three competing positions to the understanding of ethnicity, Sokolovskii and Tishkov (2002:190), mention the following ones: primordialist, instrumentalist and constructivist.

sometimes use cultural symbols consciously, so as to establish "criteria for inclusion into and exclusion from the group" (Brass 1991:19; see also Castles and Miller 2003:35; De Vos 1995:24). Eriksen concludes that, although different elements of self-identification may vary, what is characteristic for ethnic groups are "notions of shared culture" that they would have in common (2010:42).

As Montserrat Guibernau and John Rex remark, Weber attached a particular importance to "memories of a common past", preserving belonging to ethnic groups "in the collective consciousness of peoples" even after migration or other changes of political affiliation (1997:3). These people preserve their "feelings of ethnic affinity" due to, *inter alia*, community of religion, language, supposed consanguinity, or lifestyle (Weber 1997:20). Smith observes that, while certain immigrant ethnic groups predominantly adapt to dominant cultures, others (like Poles or Irish)[88] tend to preserve their traditions and identities, even if they are able to adapt to conditions of life in the host society (1981:153). Eugeen Roosens suggests that the ethnic identity of immigrants is often situational and may "be assigned a comprehensive role in certain circumstances" (1989:16). On the other hand, as he claims, ethnicity is dissimulated when it appears "irrelevant or counterproductive" (Roosens 1989:157). At the same time, based on different examples, Roosens argues that the ethnicity of immigrants is defined more by the origin than by boundaries (1994:90-91).

The simplest definition of ethnic identity seems to come from Marcus Banks, who identified ethnic identity with "the feeling of belonging to some ethnically defined group" (1996:9). George A. De Vos understands the ethnic identity of a group as the "*subjective, symbolic*, or *emblematic* use of any aspect of a culture, or a perceived separate origin and continuity in order to differentiate themselves from other groups" (1995:24, emphasis in original). Ethnic emblems can include, for example, language, clothing, or food (De Vos

[88] In this context, on the Irish community in Belgium see O'Dubhghaill (2015).

1995:24).

Eriksen observes that ethnic identities are "*creations*" of "historical circumstances" or "political projects" (2010:110, emphasis in original). He also notes that, "culture is … invented" to serve ideology, while "history is not a product of the past but a response to requirements of the present" (Eriksen 2010:85-88). According to Eriksen, the related symbolism helps to maintain ethnic identity in moments of change, especially change related to a threat, such as (for example) migration or economic change (2010:81). The author also emphasizes the relational aspect of ethnic identity (Eriksen 2015:341).

Several authors emphasize the dual origin of ethnic identity, since it is defined both by self-ascription and by external categorization (De Vos and Romanucci-Ross 1995:366; Eriksen 2010:66; Jenkins 2008a:3, 23).

2.5.4. Nation and Nationalism

The notions of nation and nationalism are indispensable for explaining how I will refer to national identity and what the relation of these concepts is to "ethnicity" and "ethnic identity".

2.5.4.1. The concepts of nation, ethnicity and nationalism

Donnan and Wilson define nations with reference to their political goals (1999:6). However, as Walker Connor argues, nations are also "characterized by a sense … of consanguinity" (1996:71). Connor sees nation as "a group of people who feel that they are ancestrally related" (1996:71) and stresses the importance of "subconscious and emotional" bonds tying the members together and triggered, for example, by national symbols, music, or poetry (1996:73-74).

In Benedict Anderson's view, a nation is "an imagined political community – and

imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (1996:6; 1997:44). Anderson further explains that its imagined character lies in the "image of … communion" in people's minds, despite the lack of tangible contact (1996:6; 1997:44).

The concept of nation has a lot in common with the concept of "ethnic group". As Eriksen points out, both ethnic ideologies and nationalism are based on cultural similarity but at the same time the boundaries which separate them from others (2010:10). Eriksen states that national identities constitute themselves in relation to others, much as ethnic identities do (2010:134). He sees the major difference between nationalism and ethnicity in the "relationship to the state" of each (2010:10). Indeed, Ernest Gellner perceived the specific link between ethnicity and the state to be the main distinctive feature of a nation (1983:1; see also Brass 1991:20). According to Jenkins, nationalism (as well as localism, communalism or regionalism, and racism) can be regarded as an "ideolog[y] of ethnic identification", while "the 'nation' and 'national identity' or 'nationality' are, respectively, varieties of ethnic collectivity and ethnicity" (1997:143).[89]

Smith insists on the "constructed" character of nations (1990:180-181) and suggests that this construction was orchestrated "by state elites or intelligentsias" (1990:177).[90]

2.5.4.2. The civic versus the ethnic model of nation and nationalism

According to Smith, a "nation" can come into being in two ways: either on the basis of "a territorial state or political community", or based on a "community of culture" (Smith 1981:18; see also Arnason 1990 on Eastern and Western types of nationalism).[91] Smith goes

[89] Eric Hobsbawm is of another opinion and claims that, the concepts of "nationalism" and "ethnicity" are "non-comparable" (1992:4). According to the scholar, "nationalism is a political programme"; whereas, ethnicity is "not programmatic and even less is it a political concept" (Hobsbawm 1992:4).

[90] In this regard, Vermeulen and Govers point out that although the role of intellectuals in constructing national identities has been much studied, also ethnic identities can be claimed to be literally constructed in the same manner (1996:6).

[91] Arnason (1990) refers to this distinction as between a Western and an Eastern type of nationalism. Western type would be "solidly grounded in social and political realities", while the Eastern type is said to emphasize "cultural unity and specificity" (Arnason 1990:231).

on to say that the Western model of national identity is based on "common historical memories, myths, symbols and traditions" (1993b:11). In the second case, qualified by Smith as "ethnic" nationalism, a community of culture already exists and is believed to be or to have become a nation (1981:18; see also Smith 1993b:11). As Smith sums up: "Genealogy and presumed descent ties, popular mobilization, vernacular languages, customs and tradition" are the characteristic features of the ethnic model of nation (1993b:12).[92]

Smith explains the main difference between Western and non-Western models of the nation by referring to the possibility of having choice in one's belonging which is left to the individual in the "Western" model, as opposed to mandatory, "organic" membership in the non-Western or ethnic model (1993b:11). As Krzysztof Jaskułowski explains, "civic" nationalism defines a nation as an open community based on loyalty towards institutions and the acceptance of political rules binding the individual to a given community, whereas "ethnic" nationalism sees a nation as a closed and bounded organic social group based on such extra-political factors as origin, culture, language, and religion (2012:185, 187; see also Góra and Mach 2010:17). According to Johann P. Arnason, "the 'civic' and the 'ethnic' components are … interdependent and equally fundamental aspects of the modern nation" (1990:218; see also Spohn and Triandafyllidou 2003:9).

2.5.4.3. National identity: now and tomorrow

Tim Edensor suggests that national identity is located, experienced, and enacted at "the local and domestic levels" where it becomes part of the daily routine (2002:186; see also Billig 1995). The author stresses the link between national identity, popular culture, and everyday life (2002:vi) where it expresses itself in routines, habits, objects, and domestic spaces

[92] Slightly differently, Hugh Seton-Watson points at the distinction between "cultural nation" and "political nation" (1977:4; see also Wagner 2003:193). While the first is defined as "a community united by language or religion or historical mythology or other cultural bonds", the latter is understood as "a community which in addition to cultural bonds also possesses a legal state structure" (Seton-Watson 1977:4).

(2002:186) as well as in popular culture, notably in films, television programmes, popular music, and fashion (Edensor 2002:141, 187). This national identity, as stressed by Clare McManus-Czubińska and her colleagues, should be "considered as a part of the individual's imagination", and thus a matter of choice; as such, it may vary over time and be subject to "contemporary as well as historical influences" (2003:125).

As Donnan and Wilson observe, much of the debate on the future of the nation-state, which is allegedly threatened by the globalization of culture, society, and the economy and by the growing power of multinational corporations and the expansion of supranational entities is focused on Europe, where the integration processes are interpreted as a prefiguration of the future world (1999:7). However, in the years since 1999 this view has become questionable given the perceived crisis of European integration. By contrast, Sztompka draws attention to the possible co-existence of different identities (e.g., transnational or continental identities) with national identities (2003:494). In any case, as Donnan and Wilson report, the few empirical studies which exist on the relationship between national and European identities seem to show that European identity is unlikely to replace national identity as the "paramount political belonging" (1999:7-8).

As Delanty and Rumford suggest, such factors as "globalization, multiculturalism, global civil society and cosmopolitan political and cultural currents", have provoked changes in national identities drifting towards plurality and fluidity (2005:53). Nations adapt to globalisation and national communities extend beyond national borders based on new imaginaries concerning "belonging, community and identity" (Delanty and Rumford 2005:88). The authors conclude that, "the nation-state is no longer the primary reference for loyalties, identities and democracy" (Delanty and Rumford 2005:88; see also Eriksen 1997:259; Tomlinson 2003:274). However, today, it might be argued that nationalism is again on the rise.

Finally, Eriksen states that:

> Europeans all over the continent (but particularly in Western Europe) are acquiring more and more in common; internal boundaries are being erased, and European culture is being creolized or hybridized as diverse influences mingle and mix in blatant disrespect of the spatial dimension. (1997:261)

Eriksen stresses that, in fact, "internal cultural variation in a country can in many respects be more significant than the variation between countries" (1997:262). As he goes on to say, "it is relevant to speak of a common European urban way of life" (Eriksen 1997:262).

2.6. Polishness

Leszek Koczanowicz observes that Polish history has been a story of the struggle to preserve national identity (2008:100). As argued by Eriksen, ethnic identity is strongly affirmed via ethnic symbols in moments of change or threat (2010:81). More recently, such intensified manifestation of Polishness became visible after the crash in April 2010[93] of the plane carrying Poland's president, Lech Kaczyński, in addition to a number of other important figures, resulting in the deaths of all aboard. A similar reaction had already been witnessed in the aftermath of the death of Pope John Paul II in 2005. Although the actual importance of these events may be debatable, they were certainly perceived and lived as important by many Poles.[94] In fact, Mirosława Marody and Sławomir Mandes even argue that "the death of John Paul II has broken the relation between national identity and religious identity of Poles lasting from the beginning of modern-era" (Janion 2007:331).[95]

[93] Russians have been accused by a part of the Polish public opinion of obstructing the investigation, while some radical right wing politicians even mentioned a hypothesis of a Russian inspired bomb attack.

[94] According to Marody and Mandes (2006), the latter was seen as a moment of the most powerful manifestation of national unity, since the early period of the "Solidarność" movement in the years 1980-1981 (Janion 2007:331).

[95] As they further suggest, restriction of the "national" public sphere to religious rituals was conducive to the development of a national idea unifying Poles around "moral rightness", and not around publicly negotiated interests. However, as they also observed, now it will have to change (Janion 2007:331).

2.6.1. Distinctiveness and sameness

While analyzing Polishness, it is useful to refer to the important opposition explained elsewhere in this thesis: between the elements of "sameness" and "distinctiveness" (Jacobson-Widding 1983:13).

"Sameness" corresponds to the question "Who am I?" and "stresses the elements of continuity, permanence, and the feeling of 'being the same'" (Marody 2003:148-149). "Distinctiveness" originates from the question, "Who am I not?" and the opposition "between ingroup and outgroup, between 'us' and 'them' (Jacobson-Widding 1983)" (Marody 2003:149).

Marody refers to the contention of Zbigniew Bokszański (1999) that Polish national identity under foreign occupation (thus, with a short break between the two wars, until 1989) was characterised by the domination of the "sameness" element over the "distinctiveness" element, allegedly related to "the lack of organizational frames" for their own state (Marody 2003:149). This proposition seems, however, quite controversial. Under Russian and Prussian domination, Polish people were in constant contact with representatives of foreign powers, who not only spoke different languages, but were also, respectively, Orthodox and Protestant, as opposed to Polish Catholics. Katherine Verdery (1996) suggests that, "before 1989, the dynamics of identity construction in Eastern Europe were characterized by sharp distinction between 'us' and 'them'" (Galbraith 2004:54). If, indeed, the national identity of the majority of the Polish speaking, Catholic population could not be forged into a nation in the absence of the state, their ethnic identity, also relational, had an opportunity to develop in contact with the dominant "other".

Who were and are "them" for Poles? As Koczanowicz observes, two main trends in Polish history traditionally recognized the main enemy, respectively, as Russia and Germany (2008:80). Marody agrees that "them" referred to the Germans personifying the "Alien" and

"the main enemy of Poland", and to Russians who, additionally, were later identified with the communist regime (2003:150). Ewa Pogonowska (2002) points to the binary opposition between Europe, identified with culture and civilisation, and Russia, allegedly representing a lack of culture, anti-civilisation, boorishness, wildness, and brigandage (Janion 2007:227). As Maria Janion explains, in this logic, "the West is logical, normal, empirical, cultural, rational, realistic. By contrast, the East is backward, degenerate, uncivilised, underdeveloped, fossilized, illogical, despotic, does not creatively take part in the World's progress" (2007:224). Norman Davies observes that, despite its geographical location in the East, "in every other sense, its strongest links have been with the West" (2001:301). Marysia Galbraith points to the omnipresence of "reflections on the position of Poland between East and West" in Polish literature and important periodicals (e.g., *Kultura)*, but also popularity of depicting conflicts with other nations in "portrayals of the Polish nation" (Galbraith 2004:58).

Marody claims that the lack of national institutions has significantly affected the formation of Polish identity, as "being a Pole" is still defined rather with reference to "moral and spiritual characteristics" and less with "institutional and group symbols of identity" (2003:149). As Jolanta Kociuba argues, Polish identity is built mainly on cultural factors and not on the basis of the nation-state and its institutions (2009:225; see also Batt 2001:247, Jaskułowski 2012). As a result of the non-existence of the Polish state, there was no opportunity to develop any rituals in the public sphere except for the one related to religion (Marody and Mandes 2005:61). Moreover, the disappearance of independent Poland in 1795 coincided with the European processes of nation-state consciousness emerging (Janion 2007:259; see also Galbraith 2004:57; Marody and Mandes 2005:51). As Galbraith further observes, in their theories of nationalism Polish sociologists such as Chałasiński (1988), Ossowski (1967), and Znaniecki (1990) favoured cultural factors over the political impact of the State (2004:57). In particular, according to Marody and Mandes (2005), specific historical

conditions have contributed to the development of a close link between religion and the formation of Polish national identity. Porter agrees that "in Poland, religious identity and national identity seem inextricably intertwined" (2001:289).

Marody and Mandes claim that Polish national identity is, thus, based on language and religion, and not on political factors (2005:61). Does this therefore mean that Polish identity is not "constructed"? Such a conclusion would be hazardous.

2.6.2. Polishness as a constructed identity

John Hutchinson referred to nations as "communities of fate", ethnic groups characterised by a particular culture, but also relying on common founding myths related to their origin and a specific interpretation of history which is attached to certain symbols (2003:38). According to Hans Vermeulen and Cora Govers, "historical and cultural myths of continuity and homogeneity" can be constructed in a literal sense by the nation-state's elites and spread among their fellows by both institutional and non-institutional means (1996:6). Hutchinson observes that myths, memories, and culture allow national identities to survive without the state (Hutchinson 2003:40). Smith suggests that if some ethnic communities could survive without their own political structures, it is notably thanks to "ethnic memories, values, symbols, myths and traditions" (1996:189). Smith stresses the importance, in this regard, of a "myth of ethnic election", a "belief that 'we are a "chosen people"'" (1996:189-90). As Smith reminds us in this regard, in Poland, the elites invented the concept of Poland as "a 'suffering Christ' among the nations, soon to rise again" (Smith 1996:195). Likewise, Koczanowicz refers to the myth of the "Messiah of Nations", according to which the necessary condition of the re-birth of Poland as a state would be the downfall of the states oppressing it, which would

then bring freedom to the whole of Europe (2008:80).[96]

Therefore, even if no modern nation State could be formed, no related rituals could develop and, logically, no civic nationalism could flourish, it would not be correct to claim that Polishness has developed exclusively on the basis of language and "native" culture. On the contrary, the stateless elites deployed a lot of effort in mobilizing people around national ideals, inventing a common past, shaping the nationalistic narrative, and coining myths, such as the typically Polish "national messianism". As a result, Polish national identity has been informed by such romantic "messianic" concepts of the Polish nation as an "innocent martyr-carrier of spiritual values, heroically resisting oppression" (Morawska 2003:171). According to Ewa Morawska, humanistic education in Poland is deeply informed by "the Romantic codes and a strong emphasis on historical (literary) memory" (2003:179). The role of memory and historical symbols has not diminished since the downfall of communism.

As Janion suggests, constantly endangered in its religious and national identity, Catholicism was treated above all as a consolation and an escape (2007:192-193). According to Spohn, "the successful role of the *Solidarność* movement, its sacrifice for the Polish nation and its contribution to the fall of communism in Poland and Eastern Europe was accompanied by a revival of Polish heroic-romantic nationalism and its core image of Poland's special mission for Europe" (2003:137). Actually, as Koczanowicz suggests, this "Messiah of Nations" attitude was resurrected in the 1980s (2008:80). Following the imposition of martial law in 1981, Poland was seen as a heroic anti-totalitarian rebel and as a "victim of repression" (Koczanowicz 2008:80). As Koczanowicz adds, this perception triggered expectations of reward for their relentless resistance after the Fall of Communism in 1989, notably with substantial international aid from Western countries, and the absence of such rewards sparked resentment against the West (Koczanowicz 2008:80-81). As Koczanowicz states, "the history

[96] Wadowski offers a more in-depth description of the identificatory role of Polish national myths (2009:423-438; for a more extensive analysis on the role of Poland as a "Christ of Nations", see also Janion 2007:275-280).

of Poland was depicted as a chain of sacrifices on Poland's part and betrayals by Western countries" (2008:81).

While reflecting on the myths contributing to the construction of Polish identity (or identities), one must also mention the period of communist rule. Most of the Polish people concerned by my research, the employees of the EU institutions, were born under the communist regime and some of them spent a significant part of their childhood or even adolescence in the late communist period. In fact, national identity was actively constructed by official means throughout the whole period. The communist state undertook an ideological offensive in order to take over and transform the national myths and the common memory. The official propaganda, including school curricula, constructed the "sameness" dimension notably by emphasizing the Slavic roots which Poles could be said to have in common with the Russians and many other nations of the Soviet Bloc, or by emphasizing the similarity (territorial and allegedly ethnic) between the Polish People's Republic and the early state (10th century) of the first princes and kings of the Piast dynasty, fuelling anti-German resentments by emphasizing the historic rivalry. According to Lewandowski, the communists were trying to convince Poles that they had regained the primeval Piast territories in the West and North (2008:272). References to early state history served the purpose of confirming the right of Poland to these territories and reminding Poles of the everlasting danger from the West and in particular from the "revisionist" West Germany. The myth of the historically "innocent" nation was also adopted and successfully developed under the communist regime. In the communist-era cases of murders and massacres committed by the local Polish population against Jews under the German occupation were officially considered marginal and banned from public discussion.[97] These efforts proved, at least to a certain extent, successful, judging from the shock experienced by Polish public opinion during the public

[97] On this issue, see e.g., Grabowski (2011); Gross (2001, 2008); Gross and Grudzińska-Gross (2011); Potel (2010).

debate on the role of Polish peasants in the massacre of Jews in *Jedwabne.*[98]

2.6.3. Polish identity today – conflicting discourses

In the 1990s after the downfall of communism, the romantic myth of the martyr nation burst out even stronger, with – finally admitted to the public sphere – discussions of the horrible fate of the Polish officers murdered by the Soviet political police at Katyn and the many other Poles who died in the Stalinist death camps. On the other hand, Geneviève Zubrzycki observes that with the fall of communism, "and the construction of a legitimate, national and democratic state, Polish national identity and the association between Polishness and Catholicism have been questioned" (2001:640). The Church's "moral and social monopoly" came to an end as, "with the advent of a legitimate state, the Catholic Church lost its traditional role as the 'nation's keeper', or at least has gained a legitimate competitor in that sphere" (Zubrzycki 2001:640). As Zubrzycki goes on to say, "the transition from communism to 'post-communism' has ... provoked the rupture of the model of relations among the state, the Church, and Polish society" (2001:640). Furthermore, it is also pointed out that there is a need for a "broadening of national identity" and to reorient it along civic terms (Zubrzycki 2001:640). The solemn mystic-national discourse has been seriously contested by the left-leaning or liberal intellectuals (some of them originating in the Catholic movements, like the circle of "Tygodnik Powszechny"). Poland has become a battlefield: domestic conservative attitudes against liberal ideas of Western origin. Discussions about the presence of the cross in the public sphere, the right to abortion, the role of the "Christian values" in the media, and re-privatization of former ecclesiastic property have undoubtedly shaped the attitudes of young future Polish EU workers.

[98] Re-construction and *ex post facto* analysis of Polish national identity in the period of communism is not the subject of my research. However, it was important to mention it to understand to what extent it may affect today's Polish EU civil servants, especially how the imprint of the communist era is often regarded as a distinctive feature of Eastern Europeans.

Polish intellectuals and elites in power have tried to promote a counter-discourse of the nation in opposition to the ethno-Catholic vision of Poland (Zubrzycki 2001:655). Thus, they have promoted

> a distinctively *Polish* civic narrative emphasizing the civic heritage of the nation in Poland, by, for example, going back to sixteenth-century religious tolerance, to the 1st Republic's multi-ethnic state, to the Democracy of Nobles and the elective monarchy, to the Constitution of the Third of May (1791), to the Polish legions fighting 'for our freedom and yours' and to the end of the nineteenth-century Warsaw positivism. (Zubrzycki 2001:640-641, emphasis in original)

At the same time, they have deliberately bypassed communism, thus making it the period "most clearly associated with the civic discourse in contemporary social consciousness" (Zubrzycki 2001:641).

2.6.4. Polishness and Europe

Galbraith reminds us that the decline of Soviet dominance in the region led some scholars to plead for the "reconceptualization of Europe, placing Poland, Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, and Hungary in 'Central Europe'" (2004:59). As she further explains, this was argued for on the basis of, for instance, cultural and religious links to Western Europe and geographical proximity (Galbraith 2004:59). It is in this period, according to Galbraith, that "there emerged an opportunity for constructions of Polish identity based less on conflict. Some Polish intellectuals proposed ways of thinking about Poland as a part of Europe, while also maintaining its own distinctiveness as a nation (Bohdanowicz 1992; Fischer 1993; Gabryel 1994; Kot 1993)" (Galbraith 2004:60).

Galbraith states that Polish membership of the European Union "is also seen as an important symbol of Poland's standing within an imagined hierarchy of nations" (2011:22). As Judy Batt observes for Central and Eastern Europeans, European identity meant "national self-esteem as a member of the family of free, independent and above all *modern* European states" (2001:250-251, emphasis in original). In this context, McManus-Czubińska et al. draw

attention to "the concept of a 'return to Europe'", which they find symptomatic of the identification of Poland with European culture (2003:127).

While drawing upon Georges Corm (2002), Janion draws a link between the Western European feeling of superiority and disdain towards Eastern Europeans (2007:20) and the inferiority complexes which have developed in the Polish mentality, the fatalistic conviction about marginality of Polish people and culture in Europe, and the related "messianistic" phantasmates (2007:20). Likewise, Sztompka writes about the Eastern-European "inferiority complex towards the West", its "idealization with its political freedoms and economic affluence", which is at the same time being "compensated by a superiority complex towards societies further East" (2004:488).

As regards the attitude of Polish people to Europe, McManus-Czubińska et al. suggest that the "'progressive' sectors" of Polish society – that is, the better educated (or raised in educated families), younger, relatively richer, and urban people – are more likely to subscribe to "dual identities",[99] and thus to identify themselves both with Poland and Europe (2003:128; see also Galbraith 2004: 67-68).

2.7. Europe, Europeanness and related notions

Although my study concerns a possible shift among the Polish EU officials towards European identity due to working in the EU institutions, it is important to briefly explain how the EU is perceived by its inhabitants and to what extent it corresponds to various expectations as regards the realisation of European unity. Therefore, it is important to introduce the subject of European identity by briefly referring to the pre-existing notion of Europe in its wider geographical and cultural sense.

[99] As opposed to "exclusive" identities (McManus-Czubińska et al. 2003).

2.7.1. Europe: boundaries and "cultural stuff" inside

Goddard, Llobera, and Shore stress after Wallace (1990) that the "boundaries"[100] of Europe move depending on the criteria against which Europe is defined, thus "institutional structures, historical geography, or observed patterns of social, economic and political interaction" (Goddard et al. 1994:27).

John Borneman and Nick Fowler point to the most popular dichotomies still present in thinking about Europe: the division between, on the one hand, the industrious, disciplined, (largely) Protestant North, and, on the other, the "spontaneous and fun loving", (largely) Catholic South; between the "rich and developed" West and the "poor and underdeveloped" East (1997:495). Joseph R. Llobera perceives Europe as being constituted of a diversity and of oppositions between its ingredients, for example, between Latinity and Germanity (2003:160-161). According to Goddard et al., there are "many different Europes", and ignoring this fact might contribute to fixing upon a wrong "essentialized" perception of Europeanness as something "bounded, homogenous and pure" (1994:30).

The problem with defining the borders of Europe seems to concern in particular its Eastern border (Delanty and Rumford 2005:32). Until 1989, this border was identified with the Iron Curtain, separating democracies from Soviet dictatorships (Delanty and Rumford 2005:34). However, throughout history these borders have repeatedly changed shape and location (Delanty and Rumford 2005:32).

Irène Bellier and Thomas M. Wilson remind us that "identities are never better perceived than in places and times of encounter with their 'others'" (2000a:9). Goddard et al. observe that the concept of "non-European", for instance, Muslim, plays an important role in the definition of Europe (1994:27). Likewise, Borneman and Fowler contend that "European

[100] As Donnan and Wilson remark the notions of borders and boundaries have been sometimes used to designate the same thing, while on other occasions they were used to mean different things (1999:19).

coherence has always been tied to some externality", such as "the infidel, the Orient, or the East" (1997:490).

Thomas Risse observes that the difficulties in defining Europe are also related to difficulties in clearly defining the "Other" (2004:258-259). Similarly, Delanty and Rumford remark that "if there is not a European self or subject, there cannot be an easily defined Other" (2005:76). Michael Bruter argues that the definition of the "Other" in the European context changed with the integration of the continent and with the altered meaning of internal and external borders of the united Europe (2004b:22).

However, it is not only the problem with boundaries that distinguishes Europe from nation-states, but also the deficit of historical memory and tradition (Abélès 2000:33; see also Delanty and Rumford 2005:99-100; Shore 2000:18; Smith 1992:74). Llobera adds that, unlike nations, the only common past Europe has is one of division, and thus its point of reference becomes the present and the future (2003:160).

2.7.2. Europeanness

Bruter draws attention to a problem which affects any study of European identity, namely the impossibility of determining what respondents mean when they refer to "feeling European" (2004b:23). Glynis M. Breakwell, based on her observation of "survey studies across Europe", claims that Europeans do "distinguish between the implications for their sense of self of being European and of being citizen of an EU state" (2004:25).

Europeanness might be defined by adherence to some broad cultural identity such as Christianity (Delanty and Rumford 2005:72). However, Delanty and Rumford draw attention to the incorporation of Orthodox and Muslim populations and the resulting growing multiculturalism (2005:72). In any case, it might be argued that, even before this, Protestants and Catholics could hardly be qualified as sharing the same cultural identity. The authors also

point to the progressive secularisation of the continent (Delanty and Rumford 2005:73). In turn, they suggest that being European means an "orientation to the world" and cosmopolitanism, and so is not so much a matter of culture or politics (2005:75). They identify it with openness to other people, acceptance of his or her values and of diversity (Delanty and Rumford 2005:76), and "existing in a state of becoming rather than being" (Delanty and Rumford 2005:194).

As Bellier contends:

> To be a European, it is not necessary to integrate in a single person the totality of the cultural characteristics found among the peoples, societies and cultures of Europe. It suffices to integrate a few of these, such as the knowledge of a second European language or a professional experience beyond the national environment. A minimum experience of contact with other Europeans, in situations which favour personal development, is necessary in order to conceive of a European identity for oneself. This is achieved within the Commission, where the experience of working together in a plurinational framework permits the development of knowledge about others' practices and reflexes. (Bellier 2000a:149)

2.7.3. European Union

In Abélès' view, the EU is an imperfect community, defined by its political will to achieve common identity, "a community in the making which defines itself as perpetually in the form of a project, focusing on an ideal whose realization is always postponed" (2000:39). As Shore (2005) remarks, this political will is not always clearly verbalized. The declared intention is "to create a new European order that will 'go beyond' the logic of nation-states and nationalism by creating a pan-national and supranational political architecture" (Shore 2005:236). However, the practicalities are left nebulous, notably what will happen with the current framework, including "state, nationhood and democracy in Europe" (Shore 2005:236). As he claims, the European Union is "an embryonic state without a corresponding nation", and the latter still needs to be created "beyond the elite enclaves of its own institutions" (Shore 2005:249). Shore calls the EU an important "new imagined community" (2000:33) and draws a parallel with the efforts of intellectuals and elites to build nation

states, through soaking the masses with nationalist consciousness (2000:221-222; see also Risse 2004:260). On the other hand, as John Hutchinson observes, the EU can also be seen as "an instrument of national ambitions", as its creation and subsequent successions derived from national self-interest (2003:44).

Smith stresses that European "new cultural imperialism" implies the necessity of replacing the nation-state with a "positive alternative", permitting the accommodation of different cultural identities (1990:172-174). As opposed to earlier, "national" imperialisms, the new ones, including European imperialism, are "supranational" and "cosmopolitan" (Smith 1990:176). In the same vain, various authors stress that the EU does not need to become a nation state and it will not or should not produce one nation (Bauman 2004a:135; Hutchinson 2003:46), but rather a "metanation" (Llobera 2003:161).

2.7.4. Enlargement of the EU and its implications

The Eastern enlargement had, according to numerous authors, important consequences for the understanding and perception of the EU project. Firstly, it posed a question about the boundaries of Europe (Kaelbe 2009:196; Triandafyllidou and Spohn 2003:7). The EU was no longer limited to the Western part of the continent, and thus the question of what exactly it embraces emerged (notably the question of the European character of Turkey and Russia) (Triandafyllidou and Spohn 2003:7). Furthermore, the spectre of the massive movement of people from the new member states to the West revived national (as opposed to transnational and European) attitudes (Castiglione 2009:37).

Triandafyllidou and Spohn suggest that the last enlargements brought a major challenge for "the political coherence and cultural convergence of the European Union" in terms of "differences in political institutions and cultural mentalities" (2003:7). In addition to economic differences, it put into question the religious and cultural homogeneity of Europe

(Shore and Abélès 2004:12). The new model of interaction between confessional and secular identities was cited among such disruptive "novelties", notably in the context of Polish Catholicism and its connection with identity (Katzenstein and Checkel 2009:215, referring to Byrnes and Katzenstein 2006).

These claims seem much exaggerated. The accession of Poland or the Czech Republic by no means implied the imminence of including Russia or Turkey. Despite the social and cultural imprint of the communist period and resulting backwardness, the new member states were not so culturally distant from Western Europe, and the religious heterogeneity was not much greater than before the enlargement – the pre-enlargement Union was Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox, some of its inhabitants were strongly religious (notably in Ireland, Italy, Greece), others strongly secularized (notably in the Netherlands, eastern Germany). However, Western Europeans probably regarded Eastern Europeans as coming from another planet, and could indeed perceive the enlargement as the end of Europe as they had known (or imagined) it before (see Checkel and Katzenstein 2009:13-14; who also timely noted that "orthodox Christianity is now an official part of the EU as well" (2009:215)).

As Holly Case observes, the 2004 EU accession was often conceptualized in Central and Eastern Europe as a return to Europe, split from these countries as a result of war and communist domination (2009:126; see also Laffan 2004:80; Risse 2004:255; Triandafyllidou and Spohn 2003:9). According to Brigid Laffan, this suggests that "since the 1950s, the European Union was institutionalised in Western Europe as the dominant framework above the level of the state" and the accession to this framework marked the confirmation of a "European" status of the acceding country (2004:80). It was also perceived as a guarantee of protection against the "renewed threats from the East, Russia and Asia" (Triandafyllidou and Spohn 2003:9-10).

Delanty and Rumford (2005) also mention a certain disappointment and confusion

related to the European enlargement in both Eastern and Western parts of Europe. In the East, it was related to accession fatigue, due to a lengthy accession process and negative social phenomena which emerged at the margins of this process, such as "the rise of nationalism, incomplete democratization and the unsettling effects of capitalism" (Delanty and Rumford 2005:29). As Triandafyllidou and Spohn add, the accession process has also sparked fears of a loss of sovereignty and of peripherization and economic domination by the West (2003:7). Furthermore, as Magdalena Góra and Zdzisław Mach observe, some nationals of Central and Eastern European countries, attached to the idea of national sovereignty regained only after 1989, might frown upon sharing this sovereignty with Brussels (2010:7-8, 21-22).

In the West, the scepticism was related to a "growing democratic deficit and a deeper crisis in loyalties" related to European integration, as well as the fear of immigration (Delanty and Rumford 2005:29). As a result, the prospects of European identity have been looked at with reluctance (Delanty and Rumford 2005:29).

2.7.5. Europeanization

Robert Harmsen and Thomas M. Wilson propose a typology of eight (partially overlapping) meanings of Europeanization in the social sciences, including, *inter alia*, "modernization" (referring to the drifting towards the European economic core by peripheral European states), "joining Europe" (with reference to EU enlargement), "the reconstruction of identities", and "transnationalism and cultural integration" (2000:13-18). The last two meanings are the most relevant ones from the perspective of the processes analysed in this thesis and thus merit fuller explanation.

Europeanization understood as "the reconstruction of identities" is "the broadest 'usage' of the term" and refers to modification of identities in Europe "in a manner which relativizes (without necessarily supplanting) national identities" (Harmsen and Wilson

2000:17). As Harmsen and Wilson further explain,

> Europeanization from this perspective must focus on issues of culture and identity, both in terms of culture as a European Union project (Shore 1998), and in terms of the ways in which EU policy has an impact on, and interacts with, local forms of political and cultural identification throughout the member states (Wilson 2000). (Harmsen and Wilson 2000:17).

Europeanization in the sense of "transnationalism and cultural integration", "refers to 'spheres of interaction' in everyday life, 'where peoples of Europe engage in face-to-face encounters with each other'" (Harmsen and Wilson 2000:18; in reference to Borneman and Fowler 1997: 497). The authors stress that Europeanization in this sense involves both the maintenance and crossing of cultural and political boundaries (Harmsen and Wilson 2000:18).

In both of these meanings, "Europeanization is about the practices involved in 'being and becoming more European'" (Harmsen and Wilson 2000:24).

Understood in this way, Europeanization can be seen as a process which is crucial for the very existence of the European Union as a polity or, at least, as a democratic polity which – as argued – would require a "demos", the European people, enabling the emergence of a "European public sphere" (Kraus 2008:14, 23-25). According to some authors, the existence of the "demos" would require a minimum cultural integration (Kraus 2003:665; 2008:26) or even a common language (Kraus 2008:23). Others argue that the European people can turn into a post-national "demos" based on purely political, "civic" basis (Kraus 2008:27).

On the other hand, Peter A. Kraus refers to the fact that European states are internally culturally diverse. This argument weakens the claims of those who oppose cultural diversity of Europe to alleged cultural homogeneity of European countries (Kraus 2003:666-667). Indeed, if the diversity poses no problem in Spain, inhabited by numerous "traditional minorities" in addition to numerous groups of immigrants, why should it render the construction of European demos impossible?

Gerard Delanty points out that Europeanization, given the diversity of national cultures and hence no real possibility of homogenization, must be based on "cultural

pluralisation" (2000:235). Delanty and Rumford see Europeanization as a process of the construction of a society "beyond national societies" (2005:1). They argue that there is an emerging European public sphere in both social and cultural terms, "a growing consciousness of Europeanness" (Delanty and Rumford 2005:4).

2.7.6. European integration

European integration is often regarded as an elitist endeavour which is insufficiently rooted in the desires of the wider European population. The process of European integration has been furthered by elites: experts and officials, and only to a much lesser extent by popular movements (Citrin and Sides 2004:163). Richard Münch offers a rationalization of this phenomenon: as the path of the European Union goes, at least partly, through the atrophy of nation-states, this project may only enjoy support from elites, which represent the "strong" faction of the society (2003:75). Meanwhile "the weak" cherish national or sub-national solidarities (Münch 2003:75). Indeed, the nation state may be perceived by some as a shelter against globalization. On the other hand, European integration, while reducing the importance of this shelter, may be perceived itself as offering protection against the threats of globalization coming from outside (e.g., Castells 2010 [1998]:352).

European integration has mostly been understood and presented as integration through "states and markets, but also through law and technologies" leading to cultural cohesion (Delanty and Rumford 2005:10; see also Shore 2000:18). However, Eriksen suggests that, even if cultural homogenization, similarity, and creolization are indeed taking place, this is more due to "globalization, or transnational processes" than to European integration (1997:263-264).

2.8. Towards European identity

The concept of European identity is central to my research. Explanation is therefore needed as to the sense in which I will use the term and the possible variants of European identity which exist, as described by different authors.

2.8.1. Defining European identity

Delanty and Rumford stress the importance of a distinction between "personal European identities" (consciousness of being European), which are proliferating due to Europeanization of social relations, and "European collective identity", which is still lacking (2005:54). As they explain, "for such an identity to exist there must be a means of expressing an explicit collective self-understanding" (Delanty and Rumford 2005:54).

Delanty and Rumford consider the main two lacking elements to be cultural and political identity (2005:74-75). As Manuel Castells claims, given the faltering religiosity of Europeans and the lay character of the State, European identity cannot be built around Christianity (2010 [1998]:368). As democracy is not a unique characteristic of Europe (and is in crisis), it also cannot be built around democracy (2010 [1998]:368-369). Likewise, the ethnic component is losing importance with the growing ethnic diversity of the continent (Castells 2010 [1998]:369).

Kraus emphasizes the necessity of "a minimum cultural consensus" for the construction of "foundations of a common public space" that he considers as a pre-condition for a functioning of a "legitimate and efficient European polity" (2003:677; see also 2008:9, 140).

Bernhard Giesen makes a comparison between national and European identities and observes that, if the former were built on the myth of an original cultural unity and common language, the latter can, despite its linguistic and cultural diversity, refer to a common cultural

heritage transmitted by its elites throughout the centuries, and consisting, *inter alia,* of the tendencies to European unity (2003:26). However, as he admits, "this cultural construction of Europe was always a matter of relatively small intellectual elites" (Giesen 2003:26).

Delanty and Rumford suggest that European identity could be conceived of as "a cosmopolitan identity embodied in the cultural models of a societal or civilizational identity" (2005:56). Such an identity would include but not be limited to the attachment to Europe (Delanty and Rumford 2005:57). Moreover, the term can be used with reference to the multitude of national, regional, or political identities which are European in the sense that they "are defined by an orientation to a broad cultural conception of Europe" (Delanty and Rumford 2005:55). Likewise, Dario Castiglione refers to the concept of "plural" European identity (2009:29), but he sees the common point of these different identities in "political allegiance to the EU" clearly deriving from elites' attempts to ensure popular support for a political system or project (2009:32).

Kraus (2003) notices that the "Westphalian" (relating identity to the nation state) order is, in any case, corroded by the multitude of regional or diasporal identities in contemporary European States. Although he subscribes to the idea that a purely "cosmopolitan" view, assuming a possibility to built an identity on a purely "civic" component, is irrealistic, he claims that the "pluralist" concepts or re-interpretation of the principle of subsidiarity might constitute appropriate models for how to deal with the question of identity in the future European polity (Kraus 2003:677-678).

2.8.2. The making of European identity

Castells argues that, although European identity does not currently exist, it can be constructed as a complement of other, already existing identities (2010 [1998]:369). In this regard, Shore

points to certain similarities between a nation-state and the EU, claiming that the EU elites[101] are trying to build and develop a European consciousness, much like the national elites recruited from the educated middle classes did with nationalist consciousness in nation-states (Shore 1996:488; 2000:32; see also Checkel and Katzenstein 2009:9-10; Delanty and Rumford 2005:55; Neveu 2000:132; Shore and Black 1994:280).

Some of the constructed myths, symbols, and cultural patterns "transcend national cultural boundaries" and "form a culture area of overlapping components" (Smith 1990:187). Among these elements, Smith mentions democracy and its institutions, civil rights and laws, Judeo-Christian ethics, humanism, and individualism (1990:187). However, as Eriksen observes, for the Europeans' feeling of Europeanness, "a shared mythical past is sorely needed" (1997:257; see also Giesen 2003:24).

Cris Shore and Annabel Black notice the germs of European identity in the institutions:

> If the public at large remain unaware of their "European identity" the same cannot be said of the Commission bureaucrats. Indeed, something of an embryonic European culture does appear to be emerging within the Community institutions, as for all that the different institutions may often disagree over goals, their staff share a similar set of experiences and life-styles, certain distinctive patterns of behaviour, and a common (bureaucratic) language. (1992:11)

However, the authors stress the distance between the EU officials and the "lay people", due to, among other things, the complexity and impenetrability of the world of the EU institutions (Shore and Black 1994:295) and the fact that the institutions have "little appeal" to "Europe's general public" (Shore 1993b:785). In this regard, Kraus reminds the Eurostat survey showing that, despite the progressive transfer of competences to the European level, the percentage of EU citizens giving priority to their European identity over the national one does not increase (2008:53-54).

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[101] Shore claims that the European institutions, while recruiting the personnel, prefer people with academic background – "in economics, law and European studies", so that they can play a role of "architects of European construction" (2000:28).

Still, Bellier points out that, according to polls, elites tend to be more favourable to Europe and suggests this will be the case for all those who benefit from European freedoms (2000a:150). Also Herrmann and Brewer suggest that educated elites benefit from EU integration more than the general public and thus tend to identify with Europe, while the rest of the European population "may move in a direction opposite to that of the elite" (Herrmann and Brewer 2004:15; see also Laffan 2004:76).

2.8.3. What kind of European identity is possible?

Bruter (2004a, 2004b) distinguishes between "cultural" and "civic" components of political identities. The former refers to the perceived individual belonging to a certain group, usually based on "culture, social similarities, ethics or even ethnicity", while the latter refers to "the identification with a political structure" (Bruter 2004b:26). In Europe, people would have a sense of belonging to a certain civilizational circle (cultural aspect) and might identify with the European Union (civic aspect) (Bruter 2004a:188; 2004b:26). Interestingly, Bruter observed that when asked "nonspecific questions about their European identity", people generally point to the civic elements of identity (2004a:201). Jack Citrin and John Sides refer to Habermas (1994), J. H. H. Weiler (1997), and Shaw (1997) who also argue that a possible future constructed European identity is likely to be "civic" (2004:183). This concept resembles a "constitutional patriotism" centred on such values as democracy, tolerance for minorities, humanitarianism, devotion to the welfare state, and such political orientations as "a spirit of transnational cooperation" and "support for multilateral institutions" (Citrin and Sides 2004:183). The authors refer to "a Europe-wide acceptance of a rights-based conception of citizenship founded on EU law rather than national tradition" (Citrin and Sides 2004:183). Likewise, Llobera claims that European identity would rather be based on "constitutional patriotism" than on "primordial allegiances" (2003:167).

On the other hand, Delanty and Rumford also emphasize the development of transnational cultural codes and identifications in Europe, as well as the common pattern of life (2005:85), while Eriksen draws attention to the importance of "ideology production", especially regarding the "creation of a shared history" (2010:91).

2.8.4. National and European levels of identification

If Smith does not think that a European identity might replace existing national identities, he predicts the possibility of the emergence of "different levels of identification ... exist[ing] one within the other" (1993a:134). Similarly, Eriksen emphasizes that one can have several identities which refer to different levels (family, ethnic groups, etc.) (2010:92).

As Risse observes, "it has become conventional wisdom among scholars that individuals hold multiple social identities" (e.g., European, regional, related to membership in a political party) (2004:253). Richard Herrmann and Marilynn B. Brewer add that, while being members of various communities simultaneously, people attach more or less importance to a given identity depending on circumstances (e.g., Europeans would feel more European in America, while their professional or religious belonging may appear temporarily less important) (2004:4). Seen from this perspective, European identity does not need to replace national identity, as both can exist and prosper in parallel (Risse 2004:271). As Risse puts it, "European and national identities are not zero-sum propositions" (2004:260; see also Delanty and Rumford 2005:54).

Three main approaches to analysing the relationship between national and European identities can be found in the literature (Triandafyllidou and Spohn 2003:8). Firstly, "Europeanness" can be seen as an additional, secondary, and subdued layer of national

identity (Spohn and Triandafyllidou 2003:8).[102] Secondly, national identities are sometimes seen as progressively declining, as European identity is gaining ground (Triandafyllidou and Spohn 2003:8). European identity would therefore be a threat to national identity (Wilson 2000:139).

A third approach, the most relevant to the purpose of my dissertation, is represented, *inter alia,* by Krystyna Romaniszyn who sees the relation between European and national identities as "an ever-developing hybrid" (2003:115). Notably, Romaniszyn[103] considers Europeanness as

> just a new item in the "kit" [of identities], coexisting alongside other identities, not a dominant identity that embeds or constitutes a frame of reference for other identities (class, national, etc.). In turn, Europeanisation viewed from this perspective appears as a process that enhances the enlargement, without causing a *thorough* reconfiguration of national identity. … Europeanisation works towards the diversification of national identity, enriching the existing identity with a new component - the European identity. The process coincides with the merits of the two current transnational processes: European integration and international migration that restore the structural and cultural pluralism of European civilization" (2003:115, emphasis in original).

Risse, while subscribing to the theory of multiple identities, nevertheless observes that, national and European identities may clash in certain cases, like in the case of EU officials who are subject to conflicting imperatives deriving from, respectively, their obligation to "work toward a common European goal" and from their national affiliations (2004:249). According to Risse, there are "three ways in which we can think of multiple identities": (1) "identities can be *nested*, conceived of as concentric circles[104] or Russian Matruska dolls, one inside the next"; (2) "identities can be *cross-cutting*. In this configuration, some, but not all, members of one identity group are also members of another identity group"; (3) "identities can be *separate*", thus, there is "no overlap in group memberships" (Risse

[102] This approach is shared notably by Stephen Wood who believes that "nations remain Europe's primary repositories and boundary markers of political identity, interest formation and legitimacy" (1998:397).
[103] Romaniszyn suggests that identity should be considered as "a 'kit' of identities, any of which may be used for different purposes and at different, suitable situations" (2003:115).
[104] Likewise, Eriksen writes about "concentric circles of social identities", with "the following levels: Europe – the country – the region – the hometown or village" (1997:266). As the scholar observes, "at each level, the individual will experience identity conflicts as well as a sense of loyalty" (Eriksen 1997:266).

2004:250, emphasis in original; see also Herrmann and Brewer 2004:8; Rother and Nebe 2009:122-123). In addition to these three models, Risse proposes another, "a 'marble cake' model", where the identity components "cannot be neatly separated on different levels", but assumes that they "influence each other, mesh and blend into each other" (2004:251-252).

Rother and Nebe (2009) elaborate on the abovementioned distinction, placing it in the European context. In the model of "nested" identities, "European citizens could hold a European identity on top of their existing territorial identities" (2009:122). If the relations between European and other identities followed the model of "cross-cutting" identities, "some but not all people in Europe might subscribe to a European identity; Europeanness could then overlap with being Protestant, Catholic or Muslim, male, female, gay, lesbian or straight and so on" (Rother and Nebe 2009:123). Finally, with regard to "separate identities", Rother and Nebe clarify that the separation would operate at the level of the individual and not of the group. The latter could hold several identities, but "there is no group that shares *both* of these exact two identities. … If Europeanness took this form, it would not overlap with national identities" (2009:123, emphasis in original).

With regard to the "Russian doll model", Ulrike Hanna Meinhof (2004) observes that it assumes that different identifications are complementary. However, she insists that different identifications could actually be incompatible or even conflictual and could be better visualized as a "volcano or an earthquake", where different formations (layers) would be threatened from above (e.g., national identity by the European identity) or from beneath (e.g., by regional or local identity) (Meinhof 2004:218).

As regards EU Commission officials, Laffan claims that their identities are "cross cutting rather than nested" (2004:90). As she goes on to say, "among Commission officials there will be variation in terms of the identities that are assumed, with room for role conflict and role switching" (Laffan 2004:90).

2.8.5. European identity and the Other

Castiglione observes that, independently of the culturally rooted or "imagined" (Anderson 1991) nature of a European identity, in addition to a positive identification, it requires a sense of distinctiveness (2009:36).

Some authors suggest that the traditional point of reference could be the United States (Citrin and Sides 2004:162; Sztompka 2004:487). According to Sztompka, this "most recent boundary" has been raised after the collapse of communism (2004:487). This choice might appear paradoxical, given that, arguably, it might be difficult to find many polities closer to Europe both on cultural and values ground than the U.S.

Similarly, Castiglione refers to possible sources of such negative identification, quoting "anti-Americanism" and "anti-Islamism" (2009:36). The major difficulty for this to happen would be the post-enlargement divisions within Europe, with new members taking a different stance vis-à-vis the United States and towards religion (Castiglione 2009:36). This view seems somewhat simplistic, as even before the recent enlargement there were different approaches to these issues in Europe, to quote a more positive attitude to the US in Northern Europe (Denmark, the Netherlands, Ireland, the UK) and clearly divergent attitudes to the role of religion in public life (e.g., between Italy and Greece on the one hand and France on the other).

Similarly, Eriksen "offers" a range of options: "a shared European identity" that, for example, "would have to define itself in contrast to Muslim, Middle Eastern or Arab identity, possibly also in relation to African, East Asian and North American identities-depending on the social situation" (2010:74).

Shore points to the problematic nature of such "othering", implying the absolutism in this approach to identity (2000:63). Indeed, if identity is "fluid and contextual", necessarily based on "heterogeneous, 'impure' and constantly changing" (Shore 2000:63) cultures, the

aforementioned approach would presuppose its fixed, essentialist nature. However, both Shore (2000) and Romaniszyn (2003) seem to believe that European xenophobia, especially against Muslims, is on the rise (Shore 2000:82) and is somehow connected with "the discovering of European identity vis-à-vis non-European immigrants, and perhaps migrants from the other parts of Europe seen as inferior to 'the West' or 'Europe'" (Romaniszyn 2003:114). Romaniszyn actually suggests that international migration could stimulate the emergence of European or at least Western European identity (2003:114). On the other hand, if Europe is a community of values, xenophobic rejection of migrants from Muslim countries might actually negatively affect the "sameness" element of European identity. Moreover, someone might argue that today Europe embraces also Muslim or African components, and building European identity in contraposition to migrants from these backgrounds could therefore only concern a part of Europeans.

2.8.6. European identity as a product of the EU

As Shore reminds us, all communities are culturally constructed as collective identities: "'imagined' and 'invented'" (1993b:781). To this end, the EU institutions are promoting "the values and virtues of [the] 'common cultural heritage'" aiming at "develop[ing] a sense of Europeanness that is proud, patriotic and distinctive, but avoids exclusiveness and jingoism" (Shore and Black 1994:294). While analyzing the concepts projected by the European Commission, Shore concludes that its notion of a "European identity" is "static, bounded and exclusivist" (1993b:781).

Several scholars emphasize the role of the EU institutions in European identity building (e.g., Bellier and Wilson 2000a; Checkel and Katzenstein 2009; Herrmann and Brewer 2004; Laffan 2004; Shore 1993b, 2000; Shore and Black 1994). Herrmann and Brewer claim that the institutions play a role as "active agents of change" (2004:15; see also

Laffan 2004:84), seeing such an identity as useful for the European project and as a potential source of legitimization, loyalty, and mobilisation of collective effort (2004:15).

Abélès observes that "virtual Europe is self-generating from the top", trying to create European identity without anything existing to build on, such as tradition or narratives of the past (Shore and Abélès 2004:12; see also Abélès 2000:33). Originally, the European integration was mostly mostly understood by the EU elites as integration of the markets (McDonald 2012:544) and hence a functionalist vision of identity building pre-dominated – a European was mostly anticipated as a European consumer (or – later- a European worker or serviceman). It is in this role that the Treaty of Maastricht proclaimed the birth of a European citizen. However, his rights were only those he could otherwise enjoy under the the existing economic freedoms and the related *acquis*. Thus, the early European citizen was *homo oeconomicus*. According to Shore, since the 1980s, in addition to integration of the markets by removing barriers and promoting the free movement of capital, goods, services, and labour, attention has also increasingly been paid to culture (2000:42-44, 1996:477; see also McDonald 1996:54; 2012:545). The Commission has notably stressed the importance of building closer ties between peoples (Shore 1993b:785) and promoted "a sense of belonging" and "feelings of 'Europeanness' among the citizens" (Shore and Black 1992:10), in order to create a European *demos*, a "European public" (Shore 2005:239-240). The author notably draws attention to efforts to replace national symbols with European ones (Shore 1996:481). Hartmut Kaelbe refers to many European symbols such as a European flag, rituals, a European anthem, a European day, and so forth (2009:206). However, only a few of them have been successful, notably "the European flag, the Erasmus program, and the EU currency" (Kaelbe 2009:206).

2.8.7. European lifestyles and values and identification with Europe

Favell stresses the importance of "the emergence of genuinely Europeanized behavior, beyond the national customs, identities, practices that European nationals have inherited from their nation-states of origin" (2001a:19). This is not yet the case on a larger scale, except for certain sectors, such as sport, tourism, and cuisine (Favell 2001a:19-20). However, Borneman and Fowler emphasize the achievements in this field, such as "European television stations (the English SKY, the French-German Arte) and universities; a European Champions League for soccer, film festival, parliament, court, and law; and a 'Eurovision' song festival" (1997:487-488). According to Kaelbe, in parallel with the "politicization" of the EU, Europeans have increasingly identified with European lifestyles and values, "with a way of life rather than a self-consciously adopted political program" (2009:203). As Kaelbe emphasizes, this phenomenon has perfectly co-existed with a continued identification with national lifestyles and values (2009:204).

The identification with certain common consumption patterns has become easier since people increasingly started to travel, study, marry, and work abroad, all this leading to the internationalisation of lifestyles (Kaelbe 2009:204-205). On the other hand, identification with Europe has not been steadily increasing during the last three decades and only around a half of Europeans (and less than half in certain countries) "identify with Europe and regard themselves as Europeans" (Kaelbe 2009:205).

2.8.8. Mobility and its impact on Europe and feeling European

As Favell observes, although free movement of persons has been one of the foundations of the EU and as a result Western societies have enjoyed the possibility of intra-European mobility for decades (2009:171), only around two percent of Europeans live outside the country where they were born (2009:168). The author stresses that the most visibly active movers in Europe

have become Central and Eastern Europeans (Favell 2009:171).

Still, freedom of movement is perceived by Europeans as the most valuable advantage of EU integration (in Favell and Recchi 2009:2).[105] Favell and Recchi remark that the impact of mobility extends not only to movers, but also to "those who encounter movers" (2009:3). As Góra and Mach suggest, "the returning migrants become a source of influence and change" (2010:23). Travelling and speaking foreign languages usually coincide, as Bruter remarks, with feeling European and support for European integration (2004a:207).

Favell and Recchi suggest that "EU movers are the prototypical 'Highly Europeanized Citizens'", showing how to "shift one's identity or horizon to a post-national or cosmopolitan level" (2009:3). According to the *The European Internal Movers Social Survey* (EIMSS), the intensity of pro-Europe attitudes is believed to increase with the period of time spent in another EU member state (Recchi 2008:216).

2.8.9. EU officials and their identity

The identity of EU officials can be seen as a complex mix of their professional identity, their national and ethnic identities, and some elements of genuine supranational, European identity. The process of "*engrenage*", as referred to by Shore (2000, 1996, 2005, 2007), seems to play a crucial role in the formation of the latter.

2.8.9.1. The process of "engrenage" and its role

Suvarierol observes that international experience (which EU officials often have prior to joining the institutions, notably thanks to studies, internships, and work abroad) make people culturally atypical, so that they "do not fit into the expectations of the primary national socialization scheme" (2011:195). Abélès et al. even suggest that some EU officials (although

[105] According to the study performed by Bruter, the most conspicuous consequences of the European integration from the perspective of his respondents and their families were related to travel and life within the EU (2004b:31).

this is not so common) "are born 'Europeans'", as they have mixed origins or grow up in a "European" environment (1993:16).

According to Bellier and Wilson, "the European Commission is an institution whose performance, ideology, and modes of integration are such that it can be considered as the 'avant garde' of a new society in the making" (2000a:11), a kind of "laboratory" (2000a:17; see also McDonald 2012:542). It can be assumed that the same also goes for other institutions, as they are staffed according to the same principles by the same corpse of officials, selected through the Commission procedures and sometimes switching between the institutions. In fact, as Shore suggests, these "powerful agents of socialisation" produce "a transnational technocratic elite with its own norms, ethos and identity" as well as "cultural practices, lifestyles and class interests" (2002:7-8). Bellier and Wilson claim that the culture created by the EU has a paramount impact on "shaping of identities throughout Europe, and the identities of Europe outside its boundaries" (2000a:8).

European officials represent "the overall European interest", which "is supposed to take precedence over the interest of their own countries" (Bellier 2000b:63,65; see also McDonald 1996:52; 2012:542). It is stated in the Staff Regulations of Officials of the European Communities in Article 11 that, "An official shall carry out his duties and conduct himself solely with the interests of the Union in mind. He shall neither seek nor take instructions from any government, authority, organisation or person outside his institution" (2016:19).[106] In this regard, Bellier draws attention to a "high level of pressures" experienced by European officials, in relation to their duty to represent a common European interest and the expectation that this interest should have precedence over that of their home countries (2000b:65). Bellier also remarks that EU officials cope with a tension between a supranational

[106] Regulation No 31 (EEC), 11 (EAEC), laying down the Staff Regulations of Officials and the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community (OJ 45, 14.6.1962, p. 1385) with amendements.
The uniform text retrieved from http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:01962R0031-20160101&from=FR

and a national identity, observing that they neither completely adhere to nor are able to liberate themselves from the latter (1993:50).

Shore (2000, 1996, 2005, 2007) refers to the process of *engrenage* (or "enmeshing"), understood as "a mechanism of institutional and ideological incorporation" (Shore 2000:148).[107] *Engrenage*, as understood by Shore, is not only the process of socialization in the universe of the institutions, but also the process of "redirecting loyalties" of newcomers towards the institutions and their ideals and coining the identity of European elites (2007:194). Shore points to the compatibility of *engrenage* with Jean Monnet's concept of integration through "functional spillover", as officials become involved with the functioning of the institution and this process triggers the sense of belonging and shifts loyalties (Shore 2007:195-196; see also Abélès 2004:4).

Hooghe points out that the cohesion of profiles and views originates not only in the selection process ("selective recruitment"), during which "the organization screens recruits for their views", but also from the fact that candidates to work in the institutions are more likely to represent the expected profile, as they tend to be already supportive of the organization ("self-selection") (2005:869; see also Ban 2009) (in this case, they may already identify with the institutions ideals, norms, and objectives prior to employment).[108] As Hooghe concludes, "self-selection and selective recruitment precede socialization" (2005:869).[109]

Suvarierol stresses the importance of "pre-socialisation" in terms of European-oriented education (College of Europe) or a *stage* in the institutions (2011:190). Moreover,

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[107] As Shore observes, "It is unclear whether the term *engrenage* entered the lexicon of EU officials via Monnet's writings or those of EU academics, but …, it has also been used to describe processes of socialization among officials in other EU institutions" (2007:195).

[108] She also adds that "self-interest [may] induce employees to share the organization's norms (utility maximization)" (Hooghe 2005:869).

[109] Ban emphasizes the role of socialization of entry-level staff, by means of a compulsory "newcomers' training program … provided by the European Administrative School" (2013:114). As Ban concludes: "since most of those recruited are at entry level, they are seen as fairly malleable, and, through both formal and informal socialization processes, most learn quickly how the organization works, including the unspoken norms" (2013:123).

"the Commission offers an organizational context in which the significance of nationality is gradually transformed" (Suvarierol 2011:190).

Bellier writes about a "conversion in which 'strangers' become colleagues (Bellier 1997), when after some time the perception of the newcomer as a national being in the office is overcome, when they start sharing the same conceptual space" (Bellier and Wilson 2000a:18). Abélès, on the other hand, argues that the fact that EU officials are constantly in contact with other nationalities might be counterproductive from the point of view of forging a common identity as it may result in the strengthening of national barriers (2004:11).

2.8.9.2. The multiple identities of EU officials

According to Bellier, the EU civil servants in Brussels have "multiple identities", namely a European one, an expatriate identity, and a collective identity "based on a professional identification to the institution" (2002:91). EU civil servants neither belong completely to their country of origin, nor "identify themselves to a single referential frame" (Bellier 2002:79). Consequently, they have developed a kind of new model of identity, namely "European identity" (Bellier 2002:79-80).

According to Bellier, professional identification with the service helps EU officials to "overcome the ambivalence of not belonging to any single national identity and environment" (2002:86) and serves as a remedy to the problems deriving from cultural and linguistic multiplicity (2002:90). The officials attach more importance to "their common destiny" than to their various origins (2002:90). Moreover, she claims that European identity can "be understood only in contrast to external national identities" (Bellier 2002:91; see also 2000b:61). Bellier emphasizes the two main instances of the conversion of "national being" into a "European being": when faced with "the image of the foreigner, of the non-European competitor to the EU's economic identity" and with the image of "Europeans which preceded

the Union, such as the European 'family', or those of nationalism or regionalism" (2000a:150). As Bellier adds, the same phenomenon occurs among other pro-European elites. As she suggests, "this may be extended in the future to all those individuals who are able to benefit from the free movement of persons, ideas, and services" (Bellier 2000a:150).

This induction of European consciousness and identity to other Europeans is, according to Shore and Black, a major challenge for the future (1994:288).

Bellier suggests that European and national identities in the institutions are in permanent conflict (1993:50; 2000a:135; 2002:86). As Abélès and his colleagues observe,

> Officials find themselves in situations in which they represent the Commission in opposition to their own country of origin: by virtue of their status and function, they embody a different entity from the one to which they might be deemed to be "naturally" attached. This puts them in an ambiguous position, and it is their lot in relation to the outside world, in the state of permanent negotiation in which the Commission and the Member States are locked. (1993:6)

Furthermore, Bellier points to "the antagonism between cultural and political identities in the European context", drawing attention to the self-perceived alienation of EU officials in their role as independent policymakers (2000b:66).

2.8.9.3. Being a foreigner and EU official: the creation of a sense of belonging

As Shore observes,

> the factors that shape everyday experience of being an EU civil servant in Brussels - *dépaysement*, quasi-diplomatic identity, multilingual work environment, residential segregation, separate schooling for their children, the relative affluence, job security and high status of their position, the continuous exposure to institutional norms and practices – certainly help to foster a strong *esprit de corps* among staff. (2000:166)

As he argues, the same factors favour the emergence of "European identity" (Shore 2000:166). However, on the more negative side, Shore remarks that these factors also estrange EU civil servants from the host society and other, "non-Europeanizing" citizens of member states by increasing "the social and psychological distance" (2000:166).

As a result, of being simultaneously *fonctionnaires* and foreigners, the EU employees are more oriented towards "cliquishness and the creation of a strong difference between 'we'

fonctionnaires (or 'people of the House') and 'they' 'Belgians'" (Shore 2000:164). Abélès remarks that EU officials share with other non-Belgians the experience of residing in a foreign country while at the same time feeling that they are subject to criticism as Eurocrats (2000:40; Abélès et al. 1993:21). This further contributes to the process of *engrenage* and to the emergence of European identity. Abélès et al. observe that "the Commission has no territorial roots and its staff, in their own perception, are cut off from theirs" (1993:29).

The aforementioned *engrenage* (Shore 2000) favours "professional identification to the workplace" (Bellier 2002:86; see also Abélès and Bellier 1996:435; Shore 2000:140).

Certainly, one could argue that this kind of "professional identity" is likely to appear in any workplace: most urban professionals wear suits and badges, spend time together after work, or develop some kind of professional slang. However, in the case of EU officials, this "corporate identity" is associated not only with a specifically European, institution-related mentality and loyalty, but is also exposed to the feeling of alienation from the host society surrounding them (and probably also from other European societies including the one of their origin). In addition to the specific lifestyle of EU civil servants, Eurocrats experience physical and social isolation which, coupled with general adherence to integrationist ideas, may lead to emotional and ideological identification with the European institutions and consequently contribute to building a new, supranational identity and to the process of constructing the separate community of EU officials.

The Eurocrats share "the sense of being 'different' from other Europeans" (Shore 2000:140; see also Abélès et al. 1993:21). Drawing upon Bramwell (1987:75), Shore suggests that a potent unifying factor is a "'defensive solidarity against the outside world' combined with 'an internal paranoia'" (Shore 2007:196). Shore draws attention to the popularity of 'house' metaphors with reference to the Commission (2000:131; 2007:164, 187, 192-193; see also Abélès et al. 1993:8; Bellier 2002:86).

Such professional identification will naturally add to other identifications (national, regional, religious, etc.) without necessarily taking precedence over them. However, the multinational pattern of EU officials, the specificity of their mission (serving interests explicitly distinct from national interests) and the particularities of their lifestyle and ideological beliefs strengthen the meaning of these distinctive features and may strongly influence their social contacts.

Chapter 3. Methodology

Before passing to the actual presentation of the research results, I will explain my epistemological approach, the research methods I used, the way I analysed the data and my positionality. I also explain the important aspects of my research and the difficulties I encountered, in particular due to the "elite" features of my informants. Finally, I reflect on the ethnographic character of the research. If the methodology discussion comes so late, it is because it is inseparably linked to the actual research, presented in the following chapter, while it seemed to me preferable to start with the explanation of the notions that continuously come back in the interviews of my researched population.

3.1. Epistemological underpinnings of the research

H. Russell Bernard and Clarence C. Gravlee make distinction between those researchers for whom "reality is constructed uniquely by each person" and those who assume that "external reality awaits our discovery" (2015:5).

While conducting my research, I was certainly influenced by the constructivist approach, which assumes that knowledge is necessarily subjective and constructed (Grbich 2007:8). Such an approach assumes the existence of "multiple realities", differently experienced by different people, while "reality is viewed as socially and societally embedded and existing within the mind" (Grbich 2007:8). Informants are considered as co-authors (Clifford 2010 [1986]:17). Indeed, almost all information about the Polish EU officials used in this dissertation comes from themselves, I relied on their vision of themselves, of the local reality, their perception of the relations with other groups of population, and so forth. Actually, as I purposefully abstained from triangulation throughout the research (I have not sought to confront the views expressed by the informants with information from other sources, e.g., with views of other EU officials, Belgians, or other Poles), the subject of this

thesis is limited to the vision of reality of the Polish EU officials.

The research participants, while being (together with me) actively involved in this process of knowledge construction (see Aull Davies 2008:114), may manipulate what they reveal (Charmaz and Mitchell 2010:164). As Clifford Geertz insists, "what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to" (1973:9). In qualitative inquiry, the construction of knowledge would consist in selection of relevant phenomena out of their "raw flux" (Lofland and Lofland 1995:68).

Although, as a researcher, I am necessarily prone to interpreting the meaning of what I see and hear in a very subjective manner, and to solicit responses to the questions that I found important and relevant, it is still worth making an effort to identify and reflect upon the possible bias. Following advice of Melford E. Spiro, I had to take into account not only the subjectivity of my informants but also my own (2014 [1996]:430).

3.2. The personal context of the research

The traditional focus of anthropologists was on "small, remote groups of people" (Bernard and Gravlee 2015:4), or as James Clifford puts it, on "clearly defined others, defined as primitive, or tribal, or non-Western, or pre-literate, or nonhistorical" (2010 [1986]:23). Nonetheless, as Eriksen observes, with time, there was a shift in anthropological research that is no longer focused exclusively on "'the tribal' or o[n] the 'non-industrial world'" (2015:39-40). Mariza G.S. Peirano uses the term of "anthropology at home" with reference to studies of "one's own society, where 'others' are both ourselves and those relatively different from us, whom we see as part of the same collectivity" (1998:122-123). This is also my case. Alluding to the term "insider anthropologist" introduced by Kirin Narayan (1993), I would qualify myself as a "quasi-insider" to the group in focus, thus the Polish EU officials in

Brussels. Similarly as the research participants, I was a "foreigner", a Pole living abroad. In line with Maren Borkert and Carla De Tona, this "reciprocal *foreignness* and *otherness*" could bring me closer to my research participants and created a kind of connection with the group in study (2006:par.24). However, not being EU official myself and remaining somehow at the margins of this community, I was not always considered as an insider by my respondents.[110]

How exactly might my specific position affect my research? What is the impact of the researcher's positionality (or "framing") on the research process? As Michael Schnegg observes, the analysis must embrace the reciprocal relationship between the researcher and the researched group (2015:42). The consequences of the fact that the research was performed from a quasi-insider's perspective cannot be limited to the ease or trouble in approaching the respondents. More importantly, it stretches also to the data obtained during the research, not only to the questions I asked and responses I obtained, but also to my interpretation of these responses. Initially, I assumed that being partly immersed in the life of the community of Polish EU officials in Brussels would not only ease access, but also make the way of thinking of my respondents easier to understand (see e.g., Lofland and Lofland 1995:23).

On the other hand, being a "quasi-insider" may pose certain challenges during the writing process. Notably, the relations of such a researcher with the research participants may have to be taken into account and hence influence the final product. In this context, Stella Mascarenhas-Keyes notes that, in case of native anthropologists (and unlike in case of outsiders), post-fieldwork contact with researched individuals may be extensive (1987:189). With this regard, it is important to recall that I needed to take into account, as it was

[110] As Nancy Naples (1997:89) notes, "insiderness and outsiderness are not fixed or static positions, rather they are ever-shifting and permeable social locations that are differentially experienced and expressed by community members" (as cited in Borkert and De Tona 2006: par. 24).

mentioned before, my own and my husband's relations with the researched community.

My husband, since the beginning of the process, was a valuable source of information contributing to my initial understanding of the overall context. This kind of information is available to the outside world, but collecting it on my own would have taken a lot of time. On the other hand, his reactions and personal views served me as a hint (but only as a hint, as I have always sought to confirm it with my research participants) to understand how certain issues may look like from the insiders' perspective. On the other hand, I needed to be careful not to rely excessively on his opinions and interpretations, as it might bias the information obtained from questionnaires and interviews. However, it was clear since the beginning that my husband should not follow my research – firstly for confidentiality reasons, secondly, in order not to influence the interpretation of the gathered data.

Since "the postmodern turn", paying attention to "the self of the anthropologist" started to play an important role in academic writing (Collins and Gallinat 2010:3). The impact of the researcher's personality on how the fieldwork experience is analysed and interpreted, turns anthropological accounts into a record of researchers' reactions to the situations experienced during the research (Rapport and Overing 2005:26). As John Lofland and Lyn H. Lofland observe, "what we 'see' is inevitably shaped by the fact that we are languaged; by our spatial, temporal, and social locations (by culture, history, status); by our occupational or other idiosyncratic concerns; and, especially relevant here, by the scholarly discipline within which our 'looking' takes place" (1995:68; see also Hastrup 2004:457; LeCompte and Schensul 1999:102; 2013:79; Schnegg 2015:33). Certain scholars referred to "filters", such as the theoretical or analytic frameworks adopted, social and cultural backgrounds, researcher's individual features (Angrosino 2007:38; Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2010: 358).

While making reference to Erving Goffman's (1974) frame analysis, Carol Grbich

argues that "framing" a researcher by his life experiences goes beyond his interpretations and affects the choice of the subject, his approach [111] (2007:17-18). Moreover, such features of an anthropologist as age and sex as well as personality traits, but also class, gender, religion, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, may provoke "different responses from different people" (Larsen 2010:75; see also Šikić-Mićanović 2010:46-48; Bernard 1995:156; Eriksen 2015:34; Grbich 2007:18). For instance, important dissimilarity between a researcher and those studied may render the data acquisition less fruitful (Lofland and Lofland 1995:23). Without denying possible bias or specific approach of my interviewees related to my gender, I believe that this element probably did not play such an important role as in case of studies in radically different cultures (see e.g., Narayan 1993:674).[112] Also the social position seems to make a difference. Stefanie Lotter points out that accessibility of the elite members to be studied depends on the researcher's status (2004:4), while Charlotte Aull Davies remarks that "the social positions of interviewer and interviewee may distort or undermine the egalitarian ethos of the research interview" (2008:111). As I mentioned elsewhere in this work, my informants mostly rejected the supposition that they are elites and I have no reason to believe that they considered my social position as significantly inferior to theirs. Also the fact that I was a woman is not likely to significantly deform the results, given the topics studied and the nature of the research group. Most of my research participants were broadly of similar age as I, I did not observe or learn about any fundamental social background differences that could significantly affect my work. On the other hand, I do not work in the EU institutions and this, obviously, prevents my informants from considering me as one of them.

However, the fact of being a "quasi-" or genuine insider, if accompanied by appropriate alertness to one's own biases and subjectivity, does not necessarily result in

[111] D'Andrea, Ciolfi and Gray specify that the researchers' work is notably influenced by "their own social locations and politics as well as by the views of involved constituencies in relation to roles, aims and motivations" (2011:155). David M. Fetterman adds that the ethnographer has also certain "biases and preconceived notions about how people behave and what they think" (1989:11).

[112] On this issue, see e.g., Bernard (1995:154-5); Jorgensen (1989:45); Lofland and Lofland (1995:41).

unreliable interpretations (Glesne and Peshkin 1992:147). Researchers also need to put their subjectivity into evidence, make the process of construction of data and meanings transparent and traceable, and diminish the impact of subjectivity, that is, through "a series of additional quality controls such as triangulation, contextualization, and a nonjudgmental orientation" (Fetterman 1989:11-12).

Moreover, in line with Jean Bazin, I find it imperative to ask the respondents about their own explanations of their acts (2003:419). Ching Lin Pang suggests that, in a research context, speaking for others who are able to speak for themselves might be criticised as unethical (2000:58). On the other hand, there are many stereotypes and prejudices on Eurocrats, especially that mass media often present a very distorted image of them, enhancing negative attitudes. I was surprised that a motivation of certain EU officials to talk to me was precisely a hope that the public opinion could receive a more balanced picture of their living conditions, often based on strikingly incorrect or grossly outdated data and negative stereotypes.[113] The EU officials have very little opportunity to correct this image as they are an easy target and a perfect scapegoat for certain media, press and politicians.

3.3. Gaining access from a perspective of "quasi-insider"

As it was already noted in the introductory part of this dissertation, the current research builds on my former study on the Polish EU institutions community in Brussels.

Being a Polish expat in Brussels, and a wife of a Polish EU institutions civil servant, I could (as I initially thought) perform this research from a somewhat privileged position as regards access and being familiar with the context. As David Silverman points out, "it is not uncommon for qualitative researchers to use their existing relationships and contacts for their research" (2010:204), as it facilitates access. Also Fetterman emphasizes the possible benefits

[113] I discuss this issue in the subsection on stereotypes. These misconceptions and errors are often factual and concern the actual existence of certain privileges (e.g., taxes) or the amount of remuneration perceived.

of an introduction by a member of a group, suggesting it may "open doors otherwise locked to outsiders" (1989:43). Initially, I was introduced to some of the participants through personal contacts (my partner or acquaintances). This usually helped me to remove suspicion or distrust (see Sabot 1999 on difficulties of gaining trust while researching elites by a researcher of the same national provenance).[114]

Danny L. Jorgensen suggests that one of the opportunities for a researcher to gain cooperation of the studied individuals comes from the latter hoping that that research is useful (1989:74; see also Sabot 1999:330). As I mentioned before, EU officials could see academic study as an opportunity to rectify a very unfavourable popular perception of themselves.

More specifically with reference to participant observation, Jorgensen distinguishes two basic strategies of gaining access to human settings, notably: "overt" (where observation is preceded by a request for permission) and "covert" (where people in the setting "are not informed of the research") (1989:45-47). According to Jorgensen, participant observation typically has a hybrid character,[115] as the information about the intentions and objectives of the researcher is communicated selectively. This was also the case of my research. I could not seriously consider remaining undercover. Not only it posed ethical problems, but it would also be very hazardous for personal reasons: the studied group included also colleagues of my husband, any behaviour that could be perceived as dishonest could affect my husband's professional and social relations. Finally, adopting a covert strategy would also be inefficient: I needed to have questionnaires administered and conduct interviews in parallel with participant observation, while a lot of my informants participated in the social events at stake. On the other hand, the awareness of the purpose of my presence could have an important

[114] However, during the research, I often struggled with questions of ethical nature, like for instance, the blurred boundaries between my private and researcher's life. This problem was also mentioned by Busby pointing notably at "distorting personal relationships" (2011:14).
[115] Gobo refers to "semi-covert" or "semi-overt" observation (2009:109).

impact on the setting and people's behaviour.[116] In an extreme scenario (which did not materialize), my observation could turn into a series of "meet an anthropologist" events where people would try to feed me with pre-cooked information and pre-arranged impressions.

It is important to stress that studying elites (especially in their work context) makes it highly difficult to use participant observation (Shore 2002:10; 2007:188-189). Consequently, my observation involved various less formal occasions - during different cultural and social events. It was not my intention to follow the research participants constantly during the everyday activities and especially in the working time. I was linked to the "community", I lived with a Polish EU institutions employee, I socialized with EU officials of Polish and other nationalities even prior to starting my study, but necessarily my contact with them was limited to their spare time.

While attending the monthly meetings of Polish EU officials, I did not inform everyone in a pub that I had come for research purposes. This would have been perceived as slightly peculiar as many of them had seen me already before (prior to my first research) and had known me as a partner of one of the EU officials. That might have certainly frozen the atmosphere, spoilt the party and – most importantly – created an unnatural situation. However, in the direct contacts with the members of the observed group, I always revealed the purpose of my presence and gave information on the research context. This came always very naturally, as a part of my self-presentation or (in case of acquaintances), standard "news exchange".

During such social events (and especially during the monthly meetings of the Polish EU officials in Wild Geese),[117] those who did not know me typically asked, as the very first

[116] Rhodes et al. argue that disclosed presence of researchers affects the behavior and responses of the informants, which, even unconsciously, are trying to produce a specific impression (2007a:9).
[117] Irish pub situated in the European quarter in Brussels. For a certain time monthly meeting of Polish EU officials took place in Wild Geese.

question, in which DG (Directorate General) I worked. They tended to assume I was EU employee, otherwise, what would be the point of my presence there? In some other cases, they would assume I was *stagiaire*. I always clarified that I was accompanying my husband who, just like them, worked in the EU Commission, while I was a PhD student in Belgium. Typically, I explained that I was doing a research on the community of Polish EU officials in Brussels. Some of them were truly interested in my study and would ask many additional questions, while others would simply turn to other interlocutors. In fact, the reasons why they participated in these monthly meetings were not only related to the need of social networking for work related purposes, but they were also interested in exchanging anecdotes or opinions from their working life to which I could not contribute. Actually, it happened quite frequently that the initial interest evaporated, once my interlocutors learned I was from the "outside". Even worse, some of them happened to grow distrustful when they learned I was anthropologist. Fortunately, others were interested and eager to continue the conversation.

What facilitated collection of research data was the fact that the meetings in Wild Geese unravelled according to a formula favouring interaction between participants, especially newcomers. Every participant heard several stories every evening, and my story was just one of them – slightly atypical, but not shockingly: especially in the later phase, meetings were also attended by a number of non-EU-institutions-employees. With time, I have managed to build some trust, which made it easier to subsequently send out questionnaires to some of the new acquaintances. Undoubtedly, the fact that I was considered as someone who was not complete outsider to the community, helped me to gain cooperation of some new participants.

During the research process, the impact of my specific positionality (being a Polish, expat, a spouse of EU official) was certainly considerable, yet diverse. While sometimes, it

would open certain doors,[118] it undoubtedly shut some others. The fact the community was quite undersized and its members often knew each other, did not help me. Indeed, during the interviewing phase I had to constantly reassure the respondents that their identity would not be revealed, that the gathered data were confidential, and that recordings would be kept in a safe place. In addition, it happened to me once that when I finally managed to meet the informant, he was afraid of meeting his work colleagues or friends while talking to me.

On the other hand, I may only presume that without having a family link with the researched group, I could fall prey of suspicion and rejection. There was an instance during one of the monthly meetings of Polish EU officials, when a woman sitting next to me, and with whom I was having a conversation, was advised (although in a joking manner) not to reveal too much as "I was anthropologist and might have had a voice recorder in my handbag".

Already Bronisław Malinowski (1939) admitted that "an anthropology of one's own people is the most arduous, but also the most valuable achievement of a fieldworker" (as cited in Peirano 1998:106). In fact, the more similar the researcher is to the informants, the less they will be willing to share with him (Sabot 1999). Moreover, they may assume that the researcher shares their perspective and already knows things hence may abstain from describing them (Aull Davies 2008:119-120; Angrosino 2007:32; see also Sabot 1999). Indeed, those who remembered me from the Polish monthly meetings did not feel they had to develop more on these social events. Furthermore, Emmanuèle Cunningham Sabot observes that elites are more likely to share important and even sensitive information with foreign researchers who also more easily gain their trust (1999:334). On the other hand, as the latter may not fully understand the local context, they may be less able to effectively use the

[118] "I have to tell you that I never answer to similar questionnaires, as I know that information collected there might be used not only for "educational" purposes. But, since you are a Polish EU official's wife, plus I have met you amongst my acquaintances …, I have decided to help you" (personal communication, October 12, 2011, my translation).

collected data (Sabot 1999:334).

3.4. Research sites

The geographical focus of the study was Brussels[119] where most of the Polish EU officials were settled and worked.

Participant observation, during various cultural and social events, took place mostly, as I will call it, in a "semi-private" realm[120] or a "parochial realm" (Lofland 1998, 1989)[121] (although, I also penetrated to the "private realm" of some of my interviewees). The observation mostly took place on the monthly meetings of Polish EU officials in one of the Irish pubs located in Schuman area (Wild Geese) and later in another venue in the neighbourhood (Aloft hotel). Besides, I participated in different cultural events of the Polish community,[122] went out to restaurants or home parties that gathered many expats (EU officials included). Similarly, formal interviews were in most cases conducted in the "parochial realm" (Lofland 1998, 1989), in close proximity of EU officials' offices in the Schuman and Luxembourg Square areas (e.g., the EU institutions' *canteens* or cafeterias, the Commission's headquarters *Berlaymont's* café; but also outside of the EU institutions' infrastructure - in different cafés, pubs, winery, or even in a bookshop).

Besides, I was "lurking" in open virtual space, notably, the Internet forum of Gazeta

[119] I did not include in my research the Polish EU institutions "community" in Luxembourg or other cities hosting EU institutions or agencies.

[120] I use this term as concerns semi-public realms with access restricted to a specific category, notably Polish EU officials, such as parts of Wild Geese or Aloft during monthly meetings.

[121] Lofland (1973, 1989, 1998) distinguishes two main categories of realms in the city, namely: "private", and "public". After Hunter (1985), she also adds a "parochial" realm. As the author elaborates, a "private realm" embraces close family and friends and is characterized by intimate relations a "parochial realm" is confined by "communal relations" with neighbors, colleagues and acquaintance networks (Lofland 1998:10, 14; see also: Lofland 1989:455), while a "public realm" can be characterized as "the world of strangers and the 'street'" (Lofland 1998:10).

[122] These included events organised by the Polish Embassy (lectures, conferences, introduction of new Polish books in the presence of the authors, etc.), yearly charity events (e.g., Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity), film festivals (e.g., Eurocine 27), Polish theatre (or opera) when staged in Belgium, but also amateur theatre of the Polish EU officials, concerts, art exhibitions, receptions, but also several home parties. I was quite often taking my lunch in one of the *canteens* (access enabled via a person employed) in the EU institutions or attended several events (e.g., movie screenings) in the European Parliament and receptions afterwards. I also attended different events that were not restricted to Polish EU employees, like, for instance, after-work-drinks in pubs located in the Luxembourg Square area.

Wyborcza – *Europracownicy* (Euroemployees), but also virtual group - *Polacy w Brukseli* (Poles in Brussels) and Facebook groups such as *Polscy Europracownicy* (Polish Euro-employees) or "Brussels Expats" (and similar).

3.5. Research participants

In the initial phase of my research respondents were selected on the basis of "non-probability" "purposive sampling" (otherwise known as as "judgment sampling") (Bernard 2011:144).

The eligibility criteria for inclusion to my study group were the following: statutory officials, temporary officials and contractual agents (excluding notably *stagiaires, interimaires* or assistants of Members of European Parliament (MEPs)). This choice was motivated by the fact that the employment contracts of representatives of the first two groups are too short or too precarious to enable development of close links with the institutions or with the community of Polish EU officials, while the MEPs assistants are not really employed by the EU institutions and were selected for political reasons and hence, they do not have the same experience and interests as the EU officials.

The second important criterion of selection was the length of stay in Belgium. I assumed that this has an important impact on EU civil servants' experience and the perception of issues, which are of interest for this study and thus, it restricted the group to those who have been living in Belgium at least for one year.

The selection of the research participants for completing the questionnaires (the new group) was, additionally, based on the criterion of "snowball sampling" ("chain-referral"),[123] which is considered especially useful in studies of elite groups (Bernard 1995:97).

At the next step, I identified "information-rich cases" (Guest 2015:235) useful for follow-up interviews amongst those officials who had completed my questionnaires, based on

[123] Thus, I used participants' "social networks to identify other participants" (Guest 2015:236).

the data collected from questionnaires, participant observation and observation of the activities on the open Internet forum. As my participant observation advanced, I realized that some of the Polish EU officials played a particularly important role in animating the social life of the group. They were popular and had an important number of friends in the Polish EU circle.

I preferred to focus on a smaller number of informants, aimed at "the maximum variation" in the sample (Guest 2015:235-236; Flick 2007:27), including both "typical" and "extraordinary"/ "extreme" cases[124] (in line with the suggestions made by Angrosino 2007:37, 48; see also Flick 2007; Goodson and Sikes 2001:24-5; Guest 2015:235).

The research sample consisted of 50 Polish EU officials. Twenty of them originated from the original number of 30 research participants who were involved in my previous research.[125] Anthropologically speaking, what I hoped to learn while approaching the same people for a second time was to understand if they had changed practices and opinions on a timespan of two or three years or if they remained anchored in their previous positions. In most cases, their positions had not changed so much over time. In addition to the 50 "official" research participants, I was in permanent contact with other EU institutions employees (both Polish and of other nationalities) or persons connected to the EU institutions, who constituted a supplementary source of information.

Because of the confidential character of the study, I refrained from indicating the real names of the participants, *Directorates General* (DGs) of their employment or hierarchical grades.

The total research group included: 27 women and 23 men employed in the European Union institutions in Brussels. At the moment of completing the questionnaires, the age range

[124] Atypical respondents were, for instance, those living in Belgium for a long time, those featuring very intensive social activity or those avoiding contacts with other EU officials.

[125] Although my initial plan was to involve all the 30 research participants from my previous research, and additionally contact 30 new Polish EU officials, it proved impossible, as some of them were not employed in the EU institutions anymore, or no longer lived in Belgium. The others failed to reply or endlessly procrastinated.

was from 27 to 50, with 38 persons below 35. The huge majority (38 persons) were in their thirties; six persons were in their late twenties and six in their forties, while only one person in the fifties. The grades, the unit, similarly as gender or age of the prospective participants were not taken as selection criteria.

Twenty persons lived alone, 29 - with partners (out of whom 15 were of Polish nationality; two were Belgians and 12 were of other nationality), while one person did not respond. The majority of the respondents (32 persons) originated from cities above 300.000 inhabitants. Very few originated from towns inhabited by less than 10.000 people. All research participants had completed university studies and all but six had experience of living abroad prior to employment in the EU institutions and living in Belgium. Some had been living in many different countries during their life, several of them for as long as ten years or more.

A great majority of the research participants (39) were employed on permanent basis.

Most of respondents (41) have been living in Belgium for at least three years, out of whom 22 had lived there for more than six years (including three real "oldcomers" from my original group - notably women who had been living here for 22, 18 and 16 years respectively). For three persons, their stay in Belgium was shorter than working for the EU institutions - two of them were employed in Luxembourg prior to moving to Belgium, while one person did some occasional freelance work for the EU institutions in the past.

3.6. Methods employed

The present study has combined different qualitative methods, such as: semistructured questionnaires (with both open- and close-ended questions);[126] semistructured face to face

[126] Although in several cases they were also asked to indicate an item from "a set of fixed alternatives" (Bernard 1995:268). In several other cases scales were applied. The scale usually ranged from "very important" to "not important at all"; "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree"; "highly positive" to "highly negative"; "very attached" to "not attached at all"; "very relevant" to "not relevant".

interviews; informal conversations; participant observation during different social and cultural events; and analysis of academic literature, complemented by other documents, both in print and virtual sources (i.e., excerpts from an open Internet forum created by the Polish EU officials, discussion on Facebook groups, or comments under articles on EU related issues - especially those related to the public criticism targeted at EU officials).

3.6.1. Participant observation

In its traditional form, participant observation is regarded as "a hallmark of anthropology" (Aull Davies 2008:77). However, as it was already explained elsewhere in this dissertation, this form of participation in elites' lives is difficult. This is the reason why, while performing my research, I gave more importance to interviews and questionnaires, while the participant observation was mostly restricted to various social events, and used only as a complementary method aimed at "understanding the context of the phenomenon under investigation" (Darlington and Scott 2002:76; see also Glesne and Peschkin 1992:39-40; Fetterman 1989:45). Indeed, the observations that I had made prior to even starting my research, helped me to "accommodate" in this environment and provided with knowledge on key figures within the Polish EU "community" in Brussels. It also helped to understand the dynamic of the group, at least the part of the group that would socialize within this more or less organized framework. Participation in numerous events, gave me a better understanding of the challenges the members of the "community" were facing in daily life and especially at the beginning of their stay in Belgium. It also helped to formulate the questions included in the questionnaires.

My role was mostly the one of the "observer as participant", that is to say, I was "primarily an observer but ha[d] some interaction with study participants" (Glesne and Peshkin 1992:40; see also Bernard 1995:138; Jorgensen 1989:55). My research included also

instances of "a complete observer" role (Jorgensen 1989:55).

It is difficult to clearly trace the beginnings of my (specifically research oriented) observation of the community, as indeed, already before my research began, I had been attending different social and cultural events of the Polish community in Belgium. It was rather a natural transition between my private and research related involvement in these events. As a result, the boundaries between my private and researcher selves have become blurred. I had not arrived in Brussels specifically to conduct my research. I had moved because of my personal life, I had been already there - looking at the developments in the Polish EU "community" almost from its beginning.

Fundamental for participant observation (Wolcott 1995) are two axes: "being there" and "getting nosy". In a certain sense my "being there" has partly been a continuous reality since I came to Belgium with my husband in 2005. I was not present at the work place, this is also why I chose to limit my research to the private life of the Polish EU officials. Still, I heard my husband telling stories happening in the working hours, assisted to meetings with his colleagues – that is how their work place has become less unfamiliar to me. However, some distance has always remained. I have also started "getting nosy" since I arrived to Brussels, but it is only after I formulated the research question that this could become sufficiently targeted.

The question then is whether my participant observation could become more a Malinowskian style participant observation. I am persuaded that this was not an effective or even possible research method to study the EU officials. Even getting a job with the Commission would not have allowed me to achieve meaningful results, as it would not have been possible to create a "field" inside the Commission, not only because of hierarchical opposition or reluctance, but also because it could have affected the work of my research participants and hence could have provoked negative reactions by themselves. More

importantly, I would be in a situation of a conflict of interest and my freedom, as a researcher, might be put into question.

At the same time, it is clear that I entered in the *Lebenswelt,* the emotional and rational atmosphere that is typical for the world of the researched people. Still, I found it important not to extrapolate my own feelings and interpretations in their mindset and in their reactions. Hence, the important place I gave to their own explanations and to their own reactions as they had formulated them themselves in the interviews and questionnaires.

Many interviews were limited in time and I could meet some people only once or twice. But others could be met several times and these "several times" were situated in "semi-public places", bars, restaurants. These are not really "private realms", but very often they permitted a serious talk and a lot of spontaneity. In case of my research participants, interviewing through a questionnaire is the easiest and the most effective way to get their participation and to create a possibility to meet them also later. They know the technique of "questionnaires" and can accept this door opener. By contrast, most of them might not accept a researcher ringing at their home door and asking for an interview or for the permission to come for a cup of tea from time to time. So, for this population, a questionnaire is not only a source of information, but it partially may also be considered as a door opener.

The role of the participant observation was to help me to formulate questions and to contextualize some answers obtained in response to questionnaires and interview questions, it also allowed me to delve into the *Lebenswelt* of the Polish EU officials.

3.6.2. Questionnaires

The decision to use questionnaires as one of the methods of data collection originated in the acknowledgement of my possible bias related to a quasi-insider position, and aimed at strengthening the reliability of the collected information. As H. Russell Bernard remarks, the

fact that all respondents receive the same questions that they answer at the moment of their convenience is a way to overcome the possible bias coming from the interaction with the researcher (2011:192). This method permitted also to reach a more important number of respondents as it would be difficult (given their limited availability) and very time consuming to interview them all (Jorgensen 1989:90), and to collect fairly uniform responses, but also, gather data on more complex questions (Bernard 1995:275).

My past experiences showed that busy EU officials would never respond to too many questions, thus, for purposes of the follow-up research of the "old" group, I disseminated a three pages long questionnaire[127] including 28 questions, whereas the questionnaires distributed in the "new" group[128] were six pages long, and included 53 questions (not counting the closing questions concerning the backgrounds of the officials). [129]

The questionnaires were prepared and filled in English (except for one person who completed it in Polish). The questions were divided into several thematic clusters and concerned the participants' opinions, perceptions, but also their emotions and feelings.

I asked some key informants to indicate persons who would meet my needs and would not mind completing the questionnaire. Curiously, some respondents suggested that their colleagues could be discouraged by insufficient anonymity. The mere fact that I was able to identify them by name (which was obviously necessary and crucial, as I wanted to have a possibility to contact them for interviewing at the later stage) could make them abstain from participation.

I contacted my "new" respondents by means of an internal mailing list, open exclusively to Polish EU officials (the "EPS" list), and counting around 1400 users. The

[127] The questionnaire can be consulted in Appendix A.
[128] The questionnaire can be consulted in Appendix B.
[129] These questions concerned: age, gender, size of the city/town/village of origins (with no prior ranks applied), educational background, past experience of studying and working abroad and its length, and the length of stay in Belgium and service in the EU institutions.

questionnaire was posted in September 2010[130] (together with my "cover note" explaining the project and my profile) on the "EPS" list[131], or was delivered by emails in attachment. The message specified the eligibility criteria. The questionnaires addressed to the participants from the original group (researched upon during my previous research) were emailed in mid-January 2012 and aimed at controlling possible changes or evolutions in the previously observed patterns and at collecting additional information on subjects not covered in the first research.

The questionnaires played an important "opening and first contact" function with researched population. Once I collected data from the questionnaires, I proceded to the "preliminary analysis" of the questionnaires (Grbich 2007:16). As the questionnaire form was originally divided into several thematic sections, the data were analyzed by "thematic headings" (Silverman 2010:238). After this "preliminary analysis" I moved to the interviews.

3.6.3. Interviewing

Semistructured interviewing seems to be the most acceptable method of studying 'elites', thus "people who are accustomed to efficient use of their time" (Bernard 2011:158; see also Aull Davies 2008:119). They become useful once a researcher has already acquired some relevant information and (in case of my research, based on questionnaires, participant observation and the previous study), "comprehends the fundamentals of a community from the 'insider's perspective'" (Fetterman 1989:48).

The purpose of this phase was to probe and develop on the responses given in the questionnaire, enhancing the richness of the data and enabling a greater understanding of the individual adjustment to work and life in Brussels. My semistructured interviewing was

[130] Due to a relatively low number of responses, it was repeated at the beginning of February 2011.
[131] A person working in the European Commission and being a member of this list enabled the access.

based on an "interview guide", including a set of questions[132] (Bernard 2011:158; Angrosino 2007:47). However, digressions of my interviewees were also accommodated (Angrosino 2007:42). Sometimes, I asked "auxiliary" questions, so as to make sure that the questions were properly understood. The interviewees were given the chance to develop their answers in an open-ended manner, sometimes even going off the topic (on this subject see Aull Davies 2008:106).

Robert Mikecz remarks that elite interviews often pose serious problems in terms of extracting response (2012:483). In case of my study, even though I had already met most of my interlocutors, it was even more difficult to make appointment for an interview, than to convince them to complete the questionnaires. Not all informants, selected out of those who filled the questionnaires, agreed to meet.

The individual, face-to-face interviews were conducted within the span of three months, during the period between 1 July 2012 and 3 October 2012. I always informed about the goals of the interviewing in advance (via emails), while asking about the participation in the interviews.

All (21) but seven interviews were conducted in English.[133] This choice made it also easier to quote verbatim my participants without possible interference with the original sense of their responses. Moreover, most of the research participants worked in English, communicated in English on a daily basis and were able to express their views and feelings in this language. However, if my interviewees preferred to speak Polish, I always allowed them to speak in their mother tongue and translated the transcripts afterwards. Furthermore, the informal conversations have been held in Polish. The interviews were recorded (with the

[132] The interview guide, which can be consulted in Appendix C, involved eight main sections (social networks; contacts with Poland; daily life; adaptation; Poles in Belgium, ideology; European identity and Polishness) each, depending on their significance, including from two to six open-ended questions.
[133] Seven respondents preferred to speak Polish.

agreement of the interviewees)[134] what permitted to focus my attention on engaging with interviewee and following the conversation flow instead of taking notes. The responses were transcribed verbatim afterwards, usually on the same day. Most of my interviews took place either after working hours (in semi-public spaces, such as different cafés, pubs or winery in proximity of their work), or during lunch breaks (in the DGs' canteens, in the cafeterias; sometimes in eateries outside of the EU institutions' infrastructure). Only two persons invited me to their offices, thus the "frontstage" (Goffman 1987; see also Mikecz 2012). As they explained, they wanted to give me an opportunity to conduct the interview in "comfortable conditions", rather than strictly because of time constraints.

I often struggled with the problem of time control by my respondents. My interviews lasted around one hour each, although some respondents had less time available.

According to Silverman, elite members tend to be reluctant to "open up" about themselves (2010:196). Some of my informants communicated even very personal information on different aspects of their lives. I was never sure if they revealed such private details because they perceived me as a Pole, an expat and an EU official's wife, or they would do it to any other researcher. In fact, the boundaries between my "private I" and the "researcher's I", were sometimes getting quite blurred. Mascarenhas-Keyes calls it "a professionally induced schizophrenia between the 'native self' and 'professional self'" (1987:180).

At the end of the interviews, I always asked my interviewees whether they would like to obtain the copies of their interviews transcriptions and if they would like to share their possible comments with me.

[134] In fact, only one person was initially against recording, but changed his mind after being assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of the recording. I was asked, however, to delete the recording immediately after transcription.

Once I transcribed the audio-recorded data, I divided them again into thematic headings, and arranged according to the identified patterns.

Before I could even start formulating the questionnaire queries or reflect on the preparation of the semistructured interviews, I needed to collect more general information about the EU officials and their relations in the EU institutions, in order to conceive and situate my research problems. I needed this information also at later stages of my research, to be able to steer interviews handily and interpret the responses. I acquired this general context mostly during my previous research, but also through various supplementary methods, such as scrutiny of the Internet forum devoted to issues related to employment in the EU institutions (popular especially in the very initial period after the enlargement), as well as, most importantly, informal, unstructured conversations with key informants in relaxed circumstances. Bernard suggests that this method is "used throughout fieldwork to build greater rapport and to uncover new topics of interest that might have been overlooked" (1995:209).

While conducting my research, I had a couple of key informants who shared with me their observations and experiences related to daily life of EU officials. I often consulted them to acquire a larger picture of issues described in the questionnaires or during the interviews. Indeed, although the functioning of the EU institutions is beyond the scope of this research, various events and phenomena occurring at the margins of the professional life of the researched group are highly relevant for understanding the context.

3.7. Data analysis and writing up data: a note on possibility of being objective

As concerns situating my research on the axis between studies that are conducted inductively, "with a view to generating new theory" and those with a deductive approach, aiming to "test an existing theory" (Darlington and Scott 2002:143), my thesis includes elements of both approaches. Indeed, while formulating my research questions, I was influenced by my

previous research on Polish EU officials and on some existing academic literature on social and cultural integration, expatriates, EU officials, identity and identification. The text is structured with help of the concepts developed notably by Eriksen (2007), throughout the thesis I refer to past findings, commenting on how they can be situated *vis à vis* my own findings. However, I did not feel constrained by the existing literature and tried to develop new analytic categories. From this point of view, my research can be qualified as "recursive" (LeCompte and Schensul 2013:83).

Although I obviously used a computer to record and keep the data, as well as to perform coding and filing operations, I did not use any specifically designed software (such as e.g., NVivo), as the amount and the nature of my data (which consisted, to a significant extent, of interview transcripts and questionnaires) did not clearly justify the added value of using automated methods.

The collected data were first filed by methods of collection and sources, and subsequently re-arranged and filed into topical categories (merging responses and observations from different sources). Once I have completed the questionnaire stage of my research, I created a table for each question, to visualize the patterns of answers. In case of closed questions, the table simply reflected the proposed values (e.g., yes/no or more complex evaluation scales proposed in the questionnaire), and the number of people having chosen a given response. At a later stage of research, I sometimes came back to questionnaires e.g., to find out specific co-relations between answers and characteristics of a respondent. In case of open-ended questions, tables contained typified responses, categorized on the basis of the preliminary analysis of the texts. Criteria for identifying such types of responses were either based on the original purpose of the question or on certain relevant patterns I discovered while reading the answers. While analyzing data I colour-coded (highlighted) elements belonging to the same category. My analytic strategy consisted in

"looking for patterns and relationships" among and "comparing and contrasting" various elements (Jorgensen 1989:108-109).

While analyzing data gathered via participant observation, I applied a similar strategy. My approach was to "identify themes or patterns in the data" (Darlington and Scott 2002:143), certain repetitive or similar behaviors or statements. To this effect, I annotated the raw transcript, categorizing and linking relevant items which were subsequently further examined to establish the actual relations between them. The categorization process was heavily influenced by questions from the interviews and questionnaires.

The process of writing up data involves reproduction of the discourse of the researched group.

At this point, having explained the specificity of my position, I need to briefly refer to the question on how my situation affects the data gathered and the related question of objectivity. According to Bernard, human perception and interpretation is necessarily affected by one's experience (1995:152). Eriksen emphasizes that:

> Far from being neutral and objective descriptions and analyses of other people's customs and cultural systems, anthropological writings are shaped by each author's biography, literary style and rhetoric, as well as by the historical period in which they were written (such as colonialism) and, of course, by the character of the fieldwork. (2015:44)

Bernard claims that objectivity becomes even a greater challenge if the researcher and the subjects of their study share the same cultural patterns, as the researcher is "likely to take a lot of things for granted" (1995:154; see also Eriksen 2015:40).

Although I am not objective as a "quasi-insider", it does not change much, because I cannot be objective already as an anthropologist. Instead, I can be expected to be conscious and honest in revealing my bias and to be transparent about how I participate in the "construction of data" thus "production of knowledge" (as labelled by Kloos 1996:184-187).

In line with the typology developed by John Van Maanen (2011 [1988]), the presentation of the results in this thesis corresponds partly to "realist tales", although some

elements of "confessional tales" are also present.[135] With these "realist accounts", using extensive verbatim quotations from my respondents' answers, I sought to describe the routines and the perception of reality of the researched community and portray the native's point of view (Van Maanen 2011[1988]:49). I tried to keep as "neutral" position as possible while giving the reader an opportunity to "'hear' the actual voices" (Angrosino 2007:79) of the research participants (Van Maanen 2011[1988]:46).

On the other hand, while analysing the results, it has become important to take distance from their perception which, to a certain extent, was or became, mine. Therefore, I tried to liberate myself from the insider's perception by confronting the data obtained from the research participants with the existing literature or other sources of information.

3.8. Definition and methodological challenges of the anthropology of elites

Studies concerning elites are still relatively scarce (see also Goodson and Sikes 2001:103; Harvey 2011:432), precisely due to their power, reluctance towards attempts to study them and "ability to protect themselves from intrusion and criticism" (Mikecz 2012:483). Already in the 1970s Laura Nader worried that the dominant-subordinate power relationships overpresent in anthropological research might affect the resulting theories (1974[1972]:289) and called for "a reinvented anthropology [that] should study powerful institutions and bureaucratic organizations" (Nader 1974 [1972]:292; see also Rhodes et al. 2007a:2).

Tijo Salverda and Jon Abbink draw attention to methodological challenges of studying elites, perceived as "closed and impervious to critical researchers" (2013:3; see also Eriksen 2015:35; Nader 1974 [1972]:302). In addition to theoretical and methodological challenges, the anthropological study of elites may also pose serious, ethical problems, as compared with non-elite research (Shore 2002, 2007; see also Bellier and Wilson 2000a;

[135] Van Maanen (2011[1988]) distinguishes three main conventions of writing: "realist tales", "confessional tales" and "impressionist tales".

Mikecz 2012; Rhodes et al. 2007a).[136]

Certain typically anthropological methods are difficult to apply while "studying up" (Shore 2002:10).[137] To take the example of my research, it would be difficult to live with Eurocrats (in any case, with more than one at the time) and to participate in their everyday-life, especially for an extended period. It is usually challenging to meet elites, even for a short interview (Shore 2007:188-189; see also Bellier and Wilson 2000a:6; Harvey 2011:434), they are "almost by definition, opaque or shielded from scrutiny by outsiders" (Shore 2002:10; see also Nader1974[1972]:302). Therefore, access to elites requires lengthy and laborious negotiations and re-negotiations, as the research unfolds (Mikecz 2012: 483; Rhodes et al. 2007b:218). As Rhodes et al. point out, it is difficult to acquire and maintain necessary trust of elites (Rhodes et al. 2007b:218, 229; see also Harvey 2011:433) who "purposefully erect barriers" (Mikecz 2012:483). However, following Lotter, I assume that "studying elites by affiliation" (being married to an EU official) and (at least to a certain extent) having access to their "social field", reduces (although does not eliminate) "the considerable problems of access and trust that are so widely discussed in elite-studies" (2004:4).

Rhodes et al. elaborated on the inversed power relations between the researcher and the studied elites (2007b:214; see also Jakubowska 2013:46; Marcus 1979:136). More aware of the context of the research and its possible consequences, they may hinder access, refuse interviews, manipulate information, insist on anonymity (Rhodes et al. 2007b:214; Jakubowska 2013:46; Mikecz 2012:483), or lecture the researcher "on what they believe the researcher should be told" (Aull Davies 2008:111), they "have legal and cultural means to deflect researchers" (Busby 2011:11).

In the same vein, Ivor Goodson and Pat Sikes observe that elites are often discrete

[136] The question "how to study elites" has been subject to reflection also by such authors as, for example, Conti and O'Neil (2007); Harvey (2011); Lotter (2004); Sabot (1999); Zuckerman (1972).
[137] On reasons for the insignificant number of ethnographic studies on elites see also Salverda and Abbink (2013) or Schijf (2013).

about their views and behaviors, as they may believe that revealing them might be against their interest or their position (2001:103). Several scholars draw attention to the tendencies to influence the research and the research questions (Conti and O'Neil 2007: 67, 70-71; Harvey 2011:439; Mikecz 2012:483-484), or to control the final product (Rhodes et al. 2007a:9; 2007b:211, 215); they tend to have their own ideas on how to conduct the research (Shore 2007:185) or transform questions so that they suit their intended responses (Conti and O'Neil 2007:70-71). During my research, I also experienced tentatives to exercise control on the research. For instance, shortly after an interview, one of the research participants asked me to send him the final version of my dissertation before I submit it, so that he could control whether the confidentiality was respected. I obviously did so and, following his request, masked out certain details which could enable his identification. Another person, one day after the interview, sent me an email asking to erase a part that would reveal her DG and position, as otherwise it would be very easy to identify her. She wrote how exactly I should replace this part of the interview. Some others tried to steer the conversation. Given the aforementioned risks, I also abstained from including the interviewees' profiles, as crossing the data from interviews with information from other sources might enable their identification.

Mikecz points at another possible risk, involved in studying elites, related to keeping an appropriate "critical distance" (2012:482; see also Rhodes et al. 2007a:9). On one hand, there is a risk of "going native", due to excessive empathy and overidentification, while on the other hand, there is a danger of strong antipathy resented towards the researched individuals (Rhodes et al. 2007a:9). Both feelings may obviously be fatal to the trustworthiness of the study.

Performing research on elites may entail specific ethical problems. Questions of ethical nature may relate to such challenges as exercising control, or gaining access in a way

that would be in line with professional norms, just to give the most evident examples.

One of the first ethical problems to cope with, while studying elites, is related to a constant risk of not being granted access (Shore 2002:11; see also S. Nugent 2002:72). This obstacle inspires Shore a reflection on whether anthropologists should indeed remain restricted to those groups which allow access, putting into question the aforementioned principle (2002:11). Another important issue raised by Shore is: "how far should the fact that they are likely to read what we write about them temper our analysis?" (2002:11). Busby suggests that researchers might choose to abstain from publishing information the studied elites would prefer to keep secret, either out of loyalty or out of calculation (keeping the possibility for themselves or other researchers to conduct further research in the future) (2011:16). As Eriksen puts it:

> It would not have occurred to Malinowski or Bateson that their books on Melanesia might have a direct influence on the societies in question … : they could write freely without taking such issues into account. This is no longer possible, at least if your work is published in a major language. (2015:42)

Although illiteracy is not that common as it was the case long time ago in some "out-of-the-way tribes" (MacClancy 2002:1), elites, contrary to literate members of these tribal societies, often live in the same country or region as the researcher and may be "powerful" enough for the researcher to take their possible anger into account.

Yet another concern, mentioned by Goodson and Sikes, is confidentiality of information the informants reveal (2001:25; see also Harvey 2011:436; Rhodes et al. 2007b:218; Sabot 1999). This was also the case of my interviewees.

Undoubtedly, elites are "cautious and risk-aware" (Rhodes et al. 2007b:217), and they tend to exercise control over information they reveal, both consciously and unconsciously, while presenting an official self-image (Rhodes et al. 2007b:220; see also Goodson and Sikes 2001:103). However, it might be questioned if it is a "feature" exclusive to elites? Are other groups of anthropological inquiry not cautious about possible results of their accounts? Don't

they manipulate the image they present to reach their aims too?

An additional problem, mentioned by Rhodes et al., is related to the elites' usual insistence on anonymity, often an entry condition, as well as their claims to comment of various aspects of the study. According to Rhodes et al. "such controls can impose lengthy delays at a high cost, particularly to younger researchers" (2007b:215).

In the context of all these elites-related problems and restrictions, several anthropologists have put serious questions about whether, while studying elites, the researcher does not need an "extra weapon", namely relaxation of certain ethical norms (Goodson and Sikes 2001:92; Rhodes et al. 2007a:9; 2007b:217; Shore 2002:11). Rhodes et al. propose that covert behavior and spy-like observation may help the researcher to "get to the bottom of things" (2007a:9). Goodson and Sikes go as far as to suggest that studying powerful groups "may be difficult or impossible to conduct without some degree of deception" (2001:92), mentioning cases where anthropologists justified their non-transparent behavior by indicating that it was a *sine qua non* condition of the access to the informants (see also Rhodes et al. 2007b:216-217).

Nader adds another important consideration: the research ethics developed to study "families, small groups, those aspects of communities which are more private than public" is not necessarily adequate to the research conducted on "institutions, organizations, bureaucracies that have a broad public impact" (1974 [1972]:304-5). However, it must be stressed one more time, that the present study does not concern the functioning of the European Union institutions, its object is not a bureaucracy in its public dimension, but members of this bureaucracy in the private life. The differences seem to be rather quantitative than qualitative: even if, in case of elites who are more conscious and can manipulate better, the aforementioned problems are more salient, the related risks and questions exist also in case of other – literate and socialised – categories of respondents and thus the

anthropologists' approach should not be radically different. Moreover, I suspected that any deceptive behavior during the research might make the EU officials mistrustful and finally hamper my studies.

3.9. How ethnographic is my research?

According to the old, classical definition by Clifford Geertz, ethnography, while it consists in "establishing rapport, selecting informants, transcribing texts, taking genealogies, mapping fields, keeping a diary, and so on" (1973:6), is essentially characterized by "thick description" (Geertz 1973:9-10). The elements of context, unique understanding of fact and things, interpretations, histories, etc. are usually discovered and noted by ethnographers during participant observation and subsequently recounted in an article, thesis, book or paper. However, these elements can also come from interviews – extensive comments not only on the specific subject of the question asked, but also on connected, proxy topics, characteristic tone or convention (e.g. solemn, correctness-mindful, yet distant and clear of any familiarity convention used by my interviewees while speaking of Polish economic migrants in Brussels), associations, metaphors employed (e.g., the frequency of "cogs in the wheel" expression used to describe my interviewees' role in the construction of Europe), etc., all these elements, available thanks to verbatim transcription and large (although targeted and selective) reproduction of the research participants' accounts provide the "thick description" as referred to by Geertz, permitting to "situate" the described facts, attitudes or perceptions and beliefs. But is it enough to qualify my research as ethnographic?

As John W. Creswell explains, ethnography is an appropriate method to describe "how a cultural group works and to explore the beliefs, language, behaviors, and issues such as power, resistance, and dominance" (2007:70). This range of issues is much broader than the subject matter of my research, but the issues that are of interest for me, such as lifestyle, socializing patterns, feelings and beliefs related to belonging, boundary making,

identifications, certainly lie within this field. Creswell quotes LeCompte, Millroy, and Preissle (1992) who mention "enculturation" and socialization among topics relevant for the "analysis of the culture-sharing group" (Creswell 2007:71). Margaret D. LeCompte and Jean J. Schensul add that the "content of ethnography" can deal notably with beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, emotions or social networks (1999:4). Undoubtedly, this is all what my study was actually about. From the point of view of purposes and the subject matter of my research, my study is ethnographic. However, Creswell expects ethnographic research to result in "a holistic cultural portrait of the group that incorporates the views of the participants (emic) as well as the views of the researcher (etic)" (2007:72). This is certainly not the ambition of this thesis: only certain aspects of the group's culture are researched and made subject to analysis. As it has been explained above, the specific conditions of the present research, as a study of elites, have made it necessary to rely more on questionnaires and interviews than on participant observation, what necessarily limits its scope of focus. Furthermore, I am mostly interested in the perceptions and the emotions of my participants, and thus I limit my own views to the necessary (or, given the methodological limitations, to the possible).

Also the use of methods itself might be considered by purists as not sufficiently ethnographic. To qualify a research as such, Giampietro Gobo expects the researcher to "participate in the social life of the actors observed" (2009:6) and claims that ethnography must be characterised by the "use of observation as the principal source of knowledge about social phenomena" (2009:190)

It is true that, in the light of the above, my study has certain non-ethnographic features, possibly shifting it towards a case study or even phenomenology.

Yet, other authors concede that, as the holistic description of culture of a group is quite a time-consuming undertaking, "contemporary ethnographies generally are focused on a particular aspect or dimension of culture" and are often "problem oriented, addressing

specific issues or problems in a community context" (LeCompte and Schensul 1999:5). Harry F. Wolcott further relaxes the "entry requirements" by claiming that "[y]es, you can do ethnography without directing any explicit attention to culture" (2008:225) and remarks that it is sufficient that that the research deals with culture "in its broadest sense, referring to sociocultural dimensions of behavior" (2008:225-241).

Furthermore, as Shore points out,

> writing persuasive accounts of government elites requires that we go 'beyond ethnography'. The challenge is to combine 'thick description' and personal observations with other types of more tangible and verifiable data so we manage to portray those elite worlds from multiple vantage points. (Shore 2007:186).

Also Charlotte Aull Davies adopts a "broad interpretation of ethnography" that she understands as a "research process based on fieldwork using a variety of mainly … qualitative research techniques" (2008:5). Although she insists on necessary "engagement" in the research participants' life, such an engagement usually has limits, unless one would plead for an extremely exclusive concept of ethnography. She also concedes that studying up, requires different fieldwork methods than studying "powerless people", as the former "are less accessible to the traditional ethnographic approach of simply going to a location and hanging out" (Aull Davies 2008:44).

While comparing my study against various analytical approaches, it appears more ethnographic than anything else. Indeed, my thesis attempts to describe and interpret the "shared patterns of culture of a group" (Creswell 2007:78-80), relies on interviews, but also, to a lesser extent, on participant observation (directly, but also indirectly, to understand and interpret the accounts gathered), and its outcome is a description of the functioning of the researched group, in terms of interactions with other groups, daily life and identification patterns. It also "involves intimate, face-to-face interaction with participants" and "presents an accurate reflection of participants' perspectives and behaviors", as required by LeCompte and Schensul (1999:9).

Elements characteristic for other approaches are also, occasionally, present in the thesis, but to a lesser extent: I do analyze specific cases (case study) and do attach primary importance to experiences described in individual accounts (phenomenology), but the purpose and the result is not a description of cases or establishing "the essence" of phenomena as experienced by my research participants. Therefore, despite the elements drawn from other analytic approaches, my thesis has more features of the ethnographic study than of any other approach.

Chapter 4. Research findings

As it was mentioned before, the results of my research feed in the analysis of the proces of integration of the Polish EU officials in Brussels along the lines of the theories of complexity and transnationalism. The term "integration", used by Eriksen (2007) in a more generic sense, may designate different processes of mutual relations and influences. As I explained previously, I typified these processes into two broader (and imprecise) categories, as understood and used by my research participants themselves: adaptation and integration. The nature and outcome of integration in the broader sense will depend on various factors, notably: characteristics of the newcomer group, characteristics of the "host society", attitudes, preferences and strategies of the newcomer group, and those of the "host society". I adopted a predominantly "emic" perspective, thus I approached the characteristics and attitudes of the "host society" from the perspective of the newcomer group. The first five sections of this part of my thesis correspond to the aforementioned factors. The first section focuses on characteristics, expectations and attitudes of the researched group, while the second concerns Brussels, as perceived by my respondents and interviewees. These findings will be compared against the previous literature on the topic, as presented in the first chapter and the first two sections of the second chapter. The following three sections constitute the part of the research meant to deliver the aswer to the first question, concerning social and cultural intergration of Polish EU officials in Brussels. They correspond to the analysis of the processes of adaptation and integration as perceived by my research participants, their perception of the attitudes towards them and their residual connection with Poland. The sixth section concerns the evolution of identity of the Polish EU officials in Brussels, to see if we can speak, in their case, of emergence of a supranational, European identity. The discussion of these findings in the light of the theoretical framework of my thesis (more specifically

sections three to eight of the second chapter) is sketched on the spot and further developed in the concluding section.

In this chapter, I often refer to the conclusions of my previous research (Rozanska 2009), to verify whether the situation has evolved since then. In such cases, I am referring to the "old group". As indicated earlier, the individuals from the old group interrogated again in the context of the current, doctoral research are referred to as a "follow-up group", while those interrogated for the first time for my doctoral research are designated as a "new group".

4.1. The Polish EU officials in Brussels

In this section I will present my research participants more in detail. In addition to their life histories, I will look at their motivation for settling in Brussels and working in the EU institutions. These features are likely to influence their attitude to integration in the new place.

4.1.1. Who they are: a presentation of the principal actors in my research

In order to better understand what the attitude of my respondents to their employment in the EU institutions was, I asked the interviewees to elaborate on their way to employment, and in case of the "follow-up" group I inquired about the important changes in their professional or private life that might have occurred since we met last time.

Here are the testimonies of the interviewees:[138]

Women

Only two out of ten female interviewees (Emilia and Aleksandra) were not involved in my previous research.

[138] More on the procedures, challenges and methods in the Methodology chapter.

Maja

I met Maja,[139] who had been living in Belgium for nearly 20 years, in a bookshop near Kunst-Wet Metro station in Brussels, close to her office. She was an alumna of the College of Europe in Bruges, now working as a legal officer in the European Commission.

As she insisted (trying to convince me she did not belong to the group of my interest), her only link with the other Polish community in Brussels was the Polish choir in a church.

Her social life was strongly "structured" by the extensive network of contacts of her Italian husband. As she mentioned during the interview, she was also living for some time in Italy in Ispra where she worked for the Joint Research Centre.

When we met for an interview, she invited me for coffee. Then followed her story:

> I came to Belgium in 1993 - I guess as a student - for one year, to work as a baby-sitter [*fille au pair*]. Then I met a boy, I came back to Poland to complete my degree and then we both settled in Belgium, as it was supposed to be easier like that. At that moment I mastered French and I had my Polish degree in Law, which was not worth much in 2005. Well, I did not master Dutch or English. I went on and on studying, I made some kind of Master in International Law, then again, I went on studying, then I worked in a Call Center, not a very interesting job. In the meantime, I divorced, I stayed in Belgium as I had a nice job, nice friends .... Well, then, once Poland joined the EU in 2004, I started to sit the *concours*. Then, after two of them, I managed to the reserve list, and six months later I managed to find a position, meaning I started to work in the European Commission as a lawyer in April 2007, and I've been working on the same lawyer's position. (Maja, August 8, 2012, 05:00 p.m.) [140]

As it seems, her personal situation at the beginning of her stay in Belgium could have only helped her to integrate into a Belgian society: she knew French, she came to work in a Belgian milieu, and lived with a Belgian family. Then she got married to a Belgian, and was living in a Flemish village for many years. She was motivated to learn Dutch at that time, as she used to live in a place where, as she said, nobody would reply in French. Nevertheless, as she confessed, she did not speak the language anymore, as also her personal situation has

[139] In order to preserve anonymity and confidentiality of the research participants, all names referred to in this work are pseudonyms. I assigned pseudonyms only to those participants who had participated in the interviewing part of the research in order not to provoke too much confusion with too many names.

[140] I remain faithful to the words of the research participants and correct language mistakes only if it is indispensable for understanding of their accounts. It is worth reminding that English is not the mother tongue of the respondents.

changed significantly. In fact, she dramatically changed the milieu: she was no longer with her Belgian partner and now she was married to an Italian. She moved from Flanders to Brussels, where she had been bringing up her trilingual son, who speaks Italian, Polish and French.

Dominika

My appointment with my next respondent – Dominika – took place at the Council. The "life history" of Dominika was quite similar to the one recounted by Maja. Interestingly, while sending back the completed questionnaire, she wrote a short note stating that her "answers were even less idealistic" than previously (she participated in my former research).

Dominika was married to a Belgian brought up in South America, who did not feel very well in Belgium and, allegedly, was not accepted by the compatriots as "one of them". As she revealed, they lived in a house where her husband's grandfather and father had lived in the past, yet they were still perceived as "others", or outsiders by the local population. For this reason, there was a moment, when they were even thinking about leaving Belgium to work in an external agency. At the moment of our conversation, her husband was just about to go, alone, for a long-term mission in an exotic destination, where she and their children could not follow him.

She arrived in Belgium before the accession of Poland to the EU as a *fille au pair* to live with a Belgian family in Flanders, where she settled. Only after becoming a mother did she move to Brussels, to have better access to the facilities, while keeping a weekend house in the countryside.

The main changes across these several years were mostly related to her private life. As she explained:

> I was single when I came to Brussels. Now I'm married, I have a family, I have two kids. Yeah, these are the major changes I would say. (Dominika, September 12, 2012, 10:00 a.m.)

When inquired about her way to Brussels and the EU institutions, she said:

> It was a kind of a plan, but I didn't attach myself. It was not something that I've chosen very scientifically, or I did a lot of things towards it, but my background was such that in a way it was pretty logical to try at least. So, I've tried and luckily I managed to get here.

After the interview, we had a short conversation on the topics around living in Belgium, or having Belgian friends. Dominika elaborated on the relations of the Polish EU officials with other Poles in Belgium. She was very incensed at the attitude of some Polish EU institutions' employees towards the Polish manual workers. She stressed that "these people just did not have such opportunities as those who now became EU officials". She also could not understand that some of the Polish EU officials did not want to send their kids to the Polish Embassy school[141] in Brussels as there were "these other Siemiatycze[142] kids as they called them". She said "kids were kids" and even in Poland, they would mingle with different social strata in the same class.

She also told me about different initiatives of the Polish community in Belgium, notably, a club of Polish women (BeKaP) and a day room organised and run by the Polish EU community for children of the Polish labour migrants.

Laura

My next interviewee, Laura was one of the most valuable research participants whom I met during my previous study. She had already lived in Belgium for over 20 years.

When I contacted her, she enthusiastically accepted my invitation and was ready to meet immediately. She proposed to collect me from the main hall of *Berlaymont* shortly after

[141] The Polish School Joachim Lelewel was opened in 1971 and is run from Warsaw by the Polish Ministry of Education.

[142] Siemiatycze is a little town in North-Eastern Poland, in the Podlasie region. According to a common belief, a significant part of its population is engaged in pendular migration to Brussels, amounting to a substantial fringe of Polish economic migrants in the Belgian capital. For this reason, "Siemiatycze" is often used by Polish expatriates and EU officials as a metonymy for the Polish economic migrants' population in Brussels, especially those originating in Podlasie.

lunch. On the way to the pressroom, Laura complained about the typical summer weather in Brussels.

During my previous research she told me how her way to the EU institutions looked like:

> I've lived here a dozen of years already, since I finished my studies, I've always been living in Brussels. I knew that sooner or later I would choose to do it so I took some preliminary measures in advance and it wasn't something spontaneous for me. I just knew I would sit the *concours* but on the other hand, I was not particularly preparing it. (Rozanska 2009:59)

Also this time, she was eager to talk:

> Nothing has happened for the last several years, except for my antipathy towards Belgians, which has significantly increased. Since I bought a flat, I try not to be in particular contact with them, but, unfortunately, it was inevitable, sooner or later ... The co-propriety meetings are pure nightmare for me. Moreover, they've learnt (I don't know how) that I'm from the Commission, so the incredible stories are going on. They're telling such dirty things about me, I've learnt that from my neighbour, it makes me sick. I'm thinking about moving out and settling somewhere, where there will be no Belgians. You just can't live near them! And such ugly things are going on, and this coming from people who are such losers, such lice, such worthless people who have never done anything in their lives and hence have not achieved anything, and they are telling such ugly things, so inappropriate, that this is simply scandalous, well, this is one of the last things that have happened ... And besides, in general, I'm getting tired with this country, you just can't live with them. As I said, this atmosphere is definitely not for me, and because of different health-related issues, it's affecting my psychical condition and, unfortunately, it is getting worse and worse. If I had a possibility to leave this country and pursue a career elsewhere, I think I would leave, in spite of my age, as I simply can't stand them anymore. (Laura, July 23, 2012, 02:00 p.m.)

When asked about work-related changes, she recounted:

> No, nothing particular has happened, I'm still working in the same place. Well, I'll be getting to the fifth anniversary, so I will have to move, but apart from this ... Well, it has somewhat improved, as my boss has got off of my back, what saves me is that my work standard is very high, so they know that they should not mess with me, if I wasn't there, there would be no one to do the job, so I don't have problems anymore.
> We have a new Director, so it's less nice, he is Dane and he is so hopeless ... I don't know, it must be some curse, some bad fate that I still have to deal with these Danes [laughter], well, … the atmosphere in the office is okay, I have not achieved anything in particular, nothing particularly bad has happened either ...

After the interview we had an off record conversation. Laura shared with me her observations on living in Belgium and on the possibility of integration. She also gave me some tips on how to deal with local service providers and how to cope with different challenges related to living in Brussels, in general. As she explained, she had always shared her observations in order to save other Poles' time on their way to adaptation in Belgium.

Otylia

Another "old-comer", Otylia, was also involved in my previous research. I was supposed to interview her in her office. She came with some documents she filled in to grant me access to the building. In addition, I was asked to exchange my ID card against a plastic badge. I had to pass through a gate while my belongings were scanned, like at the airport. Before the interview, she inquired about my research and plans for the future.

She had told me her way to the EU Commission already several years ago:

> It was absolutely spontaneous, as I had already been working by then in the Belgian administration for 14 years. Someone, a Belgian working in the institutions I had known, spontaneously asked me whether I wouldn't be interested in the upcoming *concours*, and, frankly speaking, it was only then that I realized that the Union is indeed opening to new countries. As I lived in the Belgian reality, I thought there would be a terrible competition, as indeed the Belgians have a very difficult access, and I didn't really feel like taking part in the "rats' race", as I call it. And it is only this person who presented the situation in its context, that at the moment of enlargement the situation is completely different, there is an important opening and it is enough to take it and pass it and indeed this *concours* appeared to me quite easy and I passed it at the first attempt, thus I consider I have no merit, really. (Rozanska 2009:57)

As to the changes in her personal life across time she said:

> There have been no greater changes for the last three years, except that there are some progressive changes, you get accustomed to the surrounding, take a critical look at certain things, my situation has not actually changed. No, for the last three years, I must admit, I have a kind of stability, which is normal at my age, well, I am much over 40, actually almost 50, so, at this moment, you are rather after some stability, and not any struggle. (Otylia, July 19, 2012, 11:00 a.m.)

Otylia associated any possible changes in her life with age while excluding other factors. In fact, she left Poland many years ago. She studied abroad in Germany; her (now almost adult) daughter was raised in Belgium. She went through the phase of adjusting to a new environment many years ago.

In contrast to Maja and Dominika, she lived in Brussels at the beginning and subsequently moved out.

Patrycja

Patrycja, agreed to meet the very same day I sent her my email request. We met already the next morning for a coffee (before her working hours) in one of the Italian cafés in the Schuman neighbourhood. From the very beginning she was very open; the distance disappeared immediately. She asked me to tell her more about my research.

When inquired about the way to the point she was now, she answered:

> It's started sometime around the accession of Poland to the EU when I heard in the news there would be a competition for Polish community … so I started to get interested in that. Before that, I decided to take part in Erasmus to learn better the language. During Erasmus I met people who knew already about the competitions to the European Commission. I learned about the College of Europe in Bruges,[143] that it's a good direction, so I decided to apply … So it was like a cascade of decisions … My first decision was before Poland entered the European Union. Then I just prepared myself for these competitions and I came here for the College of Europe in 2007. During the studies I took part in the competition; I passed the competition in 2008, and I started my job in 2008. (Patrycja, July 25, 2012, 08:20 a.m.)

Aleksandra

My next interviewee, Aleksandra was a woman in her thirties. Due to the time limit, we went straight to the cafeteria in the building she worked in, which was quite noisy as a birthday "party" of an official was taking place. We found a more secluded place in the corner and immediately started the interview.

Already at the beginning Aleksandra apologized and warned that she would not be able to stay as long as one hour as she had work overload at that moment. She strongly insisted on anonymity and confidential character of the interview.

Initially, she had left Poland for the UK, where she studied European Politics and where she spent several years. She complemented her "story" as follows:

> I came here just in time before Poland's accession, actually to do a *stage* – an internship in the EU Commission in 2003. Then, I took a *concours* during my *stage*. I was *stagiaire* at the consultancy for a year and when I passed the *concours* I joined the Commission and I've worked there since then. (Aleksandra, September 9, 2012, 02:30 p.m.)

Now, she lives in Brussels with her non-Polish husband.

[143] The Bruges campus of the College of Europe.

Thus, Aleksandra seems to be a perfect example of a type of an EU official referred to by Suvarierol: with previous international background (e.g., via studies or work abroad), "not typical representative of [her] national culture" already at arrival, "exposed to other cultures" before (2011:195).

Zofia

Zofia was recently joined by her non-Polish husband, whom she met while studying in France, where she had spent most of her adult life. When we met, she showed me a grocery where she would usually buy flowers. She recommended a Thai restaurant in the neighbourhood and also mentioned about the Saturday market in Bockstael.

We sat in the restaurant's garden to profit from the nice weather. While waiting for our orders, she took a paper bag with bread out of her handbag. She asked me to smell it while saying that "Polish bread is the best one in the world, and it's simply impossible to find anything comparable in taste on a Belgian market". That is why, as she said, "she always tries to buy it in Polish shops".

During my previous research I inquired about her way to employment in the European Commission, whether it was something long-planned or spontaneous:

> It was not a plan that I had forever. It was something that came as an opportunity when Poland joined the European Union. And at the time I was studying in France ... Sociology and History and somehow my studies were more and more oriented towards this type of issues. During my studies I got more and more interested by those issues and I graduated and I did my fifth year here in Belgium ... It was something linked to public management in the European Union and that was when I started preparing myself to passing the *concours*, but it was not my only career line. I did some other things, I was working in market research before, I had some other areas of interest than the European Union, but it was something in what I was definitely interested on the top of all other things. (Rozanska 2009:58)

As I interviewed Zofia for the first time shortly after her arrival in Brussels, I assumed her life might have changed quite considerably since then. Her testimony shows I was right:

> I think that now I feel much more settled down here because we've bought a house, my husband has started working … It was a bit of an issue at the beginning because he couldn't find a job here and he had to re-do a university year of studies and now he has started to work, so somehow we feel a bit more comfortable here. (Zofia, July 17, 2012, 06:30 p.m.)

After the interview, we exchanged our experiences of living in the district, she inquired more on my research and my future plans once it would be finished. She proposed to walk together home as she wanted to show me her close neighbourhood. She was happy about developments in her neighbourhood (pavement being recently repaired, new trees being planted, etc.).

Klara

Klara was in her mid-thirties, and spent an important part of her life in Greece, where her mother and parents in law now live. As she revealed, only her brother stayed in Poland. Her husband was Greek and they had a five-year-old son who was already trilingual. At the beginning, she asked me about my partial results. She came together with the first "wave" of Poles after the enlargement to work in the EU institutions: " [she] passed the *concours* – the first *concours* published for the Poles in 2003, still before the accession, and in January 2005, [she] got a job in the Commission."

Asked if her career in the EU institutions was something long planned, she replied:

> No, it was rather a spontaneous decision, although I was somewhat directed towards European issues, … as I had made post-graduate studies in European Integration in that time. It somehow coincided and that's why I decided to take part in the *concours*, but I had not planned it. It had not been my plan for the future. (Klara, September 12, 2012, 01:00 p.m.)

Inquired whether there were any important changes in her professional life across time she elaborated:

> Yes, two years ago I passed a *concours* for AD category – that is, administrator and I got a job recently, that is my boss decided to give me a promotion – that's it. I was AST[144] at the beginning and now I am AD[1].

[144] The abbreviation for assistant.

Ula

Even though Ula was still on a maternal leave, she agreed to meet for an interview. She was spending most of her time at home with a newborn baby while her three-year old daughter was already in a *crèche*.

She suggested meeting in her neighbourhood in Watermael Boitsfort, which consisted of several similar and not too high blocks of flats, in a very green and calm area. Her home, was marked by the presence of little children.

Asked about her way to the EU institutions three years ago, she revealed:

> It was not that long planned. My husband always wanted to work here. On Erasmus in Amsterdam we visited our cousin who works here and then he thought maybe he would try. And then we decided that I would also do the exam with him and it was like that ... The decision was one year and then we went for the exam. More or less it took us two years. (Rozanska 2009:58)

As to the changes in her life, she recounted:

> There were three changes: two kids [laughter] and the job change …. I changed the job, because I had passed the *concours* and I can stay, the time is now indefinite, so this is a big change, because I was previously [employed] on a contract [basis]. And I had to change job because of that, so I don't work in the cabinet anymore, just in the DG, which is a big change because I work less time and it's better. (Ula, September 17, 2012, 10:00 a.m.)

After the interview she said that her future was not really tied to Belgium and she wanted to go back to Poland at some point. She told me that, at the very beginning, she did not expect to stay in Belgium for such a long time.

We talked about education and dilemmas with regard to sending kids to European schools. As Ula said, she wanted to go back to Poland so that her daughters could decide on their belonging. She wanted them to learn Polish and intended to introduce her daughters to the Polish culture and traditions. She mentioned that travelling to Poland with two little babies was very difficult and that made difficult the contact of kids with grandparents.

Ula also told me that she was seeking a French teacher who would come to give her lessons at home as she could not move because of the baby. Previously, she followed French classes at the Commission.

Emilia

I met Emilia for the first time via a common acquaintance also working in the EU Commission. In fact, she told me, that she completed my questionnaire, which she found on the "EPS list"[145] precisely because she remembered me from the meeting with this acquaintance. Another reason was that she worked in the research field in the Commission herself and it was also why she was interested in my study.

I invited her for lunch, as it was the most convenient time for her to meet. She chose to meet in Exki[146] in the Schuman area. Here follows her story on how she got to Belgium and the EU Commission:

> So for me it started with my friends who passed the competition. I think it was the first competition in 2003 …. They passed it, and they found jobs in the EU institutions and they learned about the new competitions coming, and they ... encouraged me to take part in it. And I started to consider it together with my husband. So, we decided that okay, I will try and it was more like an adventure … and it worked. So, this was … like from a recommendation of some friends, but also from a general interest in working in this kind of international environment on some broader issues. (Emilia, September 13, 2012, 02:30 p.m.)

She was married to a Pole and had children in the school age. She was very glad that both of them were pupils at the European School. As Emilia said, the school had created great opportunities not only for children, but also to the parents, as they could easily find very close friends amongst other children's parents.

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[145] EPS comes from the accronym EPSO (European Personnel Selection Office) - a department (Directorate General, DG) of the European Commission responsible for the organization of the entry competition exams to the institutions. The first group of Polish EU officials started to socialise at the time of the first *concours* in which they could participate, officially called EPSO competition. Subsequently, those who passed the *concours* started to refer to themselves as "epsy" (or "eps" in singular) and their emailing list was called "eps-list" or "EPS list".

[146] A quality fast-food restaurant.

Men

Only five out of 11 men were involved in my previous research. However, the contacts with some of the "new" informants were established already before starting the research, mainly during the Polish monthly meetings in Wild Geese:

Maksymilian

My first male interviewee, Maksymilian could only meet for the interview in the evening at his home due to a quite significant work overload. Actually, he was one of the key informants, involved in my previous research. His way to the EU institutions seems to be well-conceived, far from being spontaneous.

> I'm thinking because I'm trying to recall at what moment precisely I had this idea to try to pass the *concours* and to become an EU official. I think I started to take it seriously into account during my studies in France. After I'd finished my studies in Poland, I studied in France for three years, and these were mostly European Studies, and during these studies, in Strasbourg, well, I still thought that maybe I would be just a lawyer specialized in EU law. But I also started to seriously take into account a possibility of future employment in the EU institutions, but I knew that it was quite difficult to pass the *concours*. So, I mean, it was just one of the options, but not the only one. Then, I came back to Poland and I worked for two years in the Polish administration and still, becoming an EU official was not the only idea I had. I thought that maybe I would gain some experience, while working in the Polish administration and maybe afterwards, I would work in a law firm, or as a so-called in-house lawyer. But of course I knew that there would be a *concours* for Polish citizens after Poland's accession to the European Union and I knew that I would try to pass it. And then I tried, I succeeded, and then I came to Brussels, I started to work in the EU Commission … Just to sum up, this was an idea, which I had in mind for quite a long time. I wanted to be an EU official, but this was not of course the only option and there were other possibilities that I seriously took into account. (Maksymilian, July 1, 2012, 09:00 p.m.)

I asked Maksymilian if there were any changes in his private life:

> Well, during the last three years maybe yes, maybe I have more acquaintances now. I wouldn't say that I have more friends, but I have at least more acquaintances, mostly Belgian or expat people that I met at the gym …, but I don't see these people outside the gym … . It has certainly modified a little bit my universe here and probably it made my life better … But apart from this, I don't think anything else has changed.

Similarly, there were no important changes in his professional life:

> My professional life hasn't changed. … I don't know whether this is an experience which is common to many EU officials or is it just my experience, but I have this impression that for the last five years actually, nothing really changed in my life and I'm doing more or less the same thing. The rhythm of my life is the same. I don't have any mid-term objectives that I'm

> trying to achieve, like during the time I joined … the EU Commission, so sometimes I have difficulty to situate certain events in the past. I mean it could happen a year ago or four years ago, but I cannot precisely recall when actually something happened, because every day, every week, every month, every year is similar.

Beniamin

I met Beniamin, my second interviewee, after work at Schuman Roundabout. He arrived on city bike.

His way to the European Commission looked quite different from those of other interviewees:

> I don't think it will be an exaggeration if I say that I always wanted to work in the Commission, in the European institutions. My story is a bit different than the stories of other people, because I was working for the national authority and I had the chance to come a few times to Brussels to assist different meetings organized by the Commission. And I've always liked the Commission as an institution, but I also liked very much the Commission buildings with narrow, long corridors and offices, which looked the same. I always considered the Commission and people working in the Commission as very intelligent and the best experts in their area, frankly. And I have always wanted to be one of them. But I never considered myself to be intelligent enough to pass the competition. That is why I didn't even try to pass the first competitions that were organized for the Polish citizens. … But somehow, I've managed to come here because, my director sent me as a national expert, so I was seconded by my Ministry to the Commission for two years. And I liked being here so much that, when I was in the second year, I decided to pass the competition. I passed the competition and I stayed in the Commission, so I've always wanted to work in the Commission and somehow I was lucky enough to achieve this goal. (Beniamin, July 9, 2012, 07:00 p.m.)

After the interview, my respondent gave me some suggestions. He said I should have asked if someone was buying an apartment or a house in Belgium as according to him it would be a visible sign that someone considers staying for good in Belgium. In fact, he said he was a good example as he was thinking about purchasing a flat soon. As he admitted, he was looking for something in the neighbourhood of his office, where his favourite bars and restaurants were situated and where his friends also lived. He revealed that it was related to the fact he was single and he felt lonely in Belgium. He said he also had to have everything close to his place. Then we switched to daily routines. He mentioned he was enrolled for the Russian classes at the Commission, but due to his working hours he was able to attend only

the first lesson and as a result he was scratched out from the list. Even though he planned to stay in Brussels for long, he did not plan to learn Dutch.

Sebastian

My next interviewee Sebastian was involved in my previous research. We had an appointment in front of the Paul bakery close to the Shuman area.

At the beginning, Sebastian wanted to make sure that being himself a sociologist did not exclude him from my research. Then he started recounting his story:

> The way [to Brussels] was kind of natural … At the beginning of the transformation in Poland … I got involved in an EU support program - financial assistance of the European Union (then European Community) to support Poland … and I actually evolved together with the evolution of this program, and so educated myself toward European Integration without any particular intention of coming to Brussels, but it somehow appeared natural. In the meantime, I got also the second dimension of my professional interest, … it was public procurement - into which I started getting involved. First, incidentally, and then I realized, that it actually, it's fun. … And so I was more and more involved in public procurement and, … when incidentally I passed the *concours*, yeah, it was kind of natural to adapt where I am now. (Sebastian, September 27, 2012, 6:00 p.m.)

Sebastian could not recall any important changes in his career or life since his arrival in Brussels: "I've been here for five years, so I'm completely stuck to one desk".

After the interview he said he was not very typical as he lived somewhere in-between Poland and Belgium. As he said, usually, the question concerning the place he was coming from was difficult to answer. In fact, he was back in Poland every two weeks or even more often.

Stanislaw

Although Stanislaw was not taking part in my previous research, I have met him many times before, as he was an important member of the Polish-EU institutions' community. Initially, he proposed to meet in a Polish bar in close proximity of the European Parliament (*Fleur d'Europe,* known in the Polish circle also as *"U Pani Basi*"). As the bar was closed during

the summer holidays, we went to a neighbouring Exki. Stanislaw was quite busy and he had another appointment right after the interview.

He proposed to record a kind of an introduction and also to share his opinions on the EU and Poland's role in the EU:

> Today is July 26, 2012, Stanislaw Kowalski, an employee of the European Parliament, Foreign Affairs Commission. In Brussels since November 2004, formerly in the Commission and assistant in the European Parliament.
> I believe that the year 2004 was a very important year for the modern Poland. Of course, it is about the accession of Poland to the European Union, but, in the background of this event, the very important fact was that the borders were opened, in the figurative and in the literal sense. And still in the year 2003, if I'm not mistaken, the unemployment in Poland neighboured 18 percent. We were, if I can say, threatened by the Arab Spring, but this safety valve which the opening of the borders proved to be, opened and gave a chance to many people who would not be able to secure any decent vital minimum in Poland, it gave them the possibility of earning decent money in this kind of social Europe. But let us leave these, somehow, lowest variants. Those who profited most were young persons with University education who were able to spread their wings in the West what proved to be a successful ordeal for the Polish education system. It turned out that their education [quality] does not disqualify them in comparison with their colleagues who graduated in the Western Europe's universities.
> So … this was a huge opportunity and this is what [a Polish MEP] my employer and my mentor… [believed in], that for him, the year 2004 stood for a great opportunity. It was about offering this opportunity to the Poles. He believed very much in young Poles. He knew, he anticipated that we would find our place here in a positive way.
> It was about creating this opportunity, creating conditions, that's what this Europe was about. He was confident we were going to manage it here. It was only about opening these borders.

After his introduction I asked Stanislaw about his way to the EU institutions:

> I was born in 1977, this means that when I was finishing … my studies ... in 2001, … it was already after these ten crazy years of the first years of an independence, when, as we now hear stories, … it was enough to have a higher education in order to be the CEO of some company in Warsaw.
> Unfortunately, when I was entering the market, it was already too late, but you know what? I had this glimpse of some smartness during my studies that I was very focused on the internships. Each year, I was doing at least three internships and trust me, at that time it was still not that popular. It was still not popular, but this equipped me with a good, real oriented background and experience, which was then needed … by the employers.
> Anyway, in 2001, I decided to improve my skills and use the opportunities of an open Europe. I went … to study (for one year) economics in Germany. There, I met one businessman. I went back to Poland, I started our company for one year, and then after one year I got a scholarship and I went … for graduate studies at the one of the best school in the EU in field of international relations. So, I studied there between 2003-2004.
> 2004 was the year of accession. I decided to send an application to four out of the [MEPs] I admired most. … I applied for an internship; I got the job. So, this is my story… . I was the head of a Polish MEP's office in Brussels, where I was responsible for various committees following the Committee of Foreign Affairs and the Constitutional Committee and also for the smooth work of the office. … between 2008-2012, I used to work for the European Commission, DG Regional Policy, and Polish Unit. And now I just started in July the work in the European Parliament, as administrator in department of Foreign Policy in AFETH (*Affaires Etrangère*s) secretariat, this is the unit which is preparing and organizing the work

> of the Foreign Committee AFETH in European Parliament and thanks to Lisbon Treaty, the Parliament has been empowered in this sphere so I treat it as a challenge. (Stanislaw, July 26, 2012, 05:30 p.m.)

After the interview, he said he had recently moved from Etterbeek to Forest and he really tried to adapt there. He was very much involved in the local community's life. He stressed he was not a complaining expat who did not want to adapt and created his own self-sufficient reality. He added that he and his partner spent even the New Year's Eve with people from a club in Brussels of which they were members, and they felt well integrated in Belgium. He showed me a sticker *Polska* on his car (printed next to the Belgian plates) and declared he had it also on his other cars. He was continuously emphasising his Polishness.

Filip

Filip was yet another interviewee involved in my previous research and was very much engaged in life of the Polish EU institutions community. Actually, he was the organizer of the monthly meetings of Polish EU officials – both in Belgium and Warsaw.

I met him just after his working hours, in front of the EU Parliament. Already at the beginning, he stressed he would prefer not to go to *Fleur d'Europe*. As Filip had another appointment already 30 minutes later, he decided to go to Exki.

During the previous research, I asked him, whether working in the EU institutions was long planned by him. At that time he said:

> It was a spontaneous decision that was made ten years before employment, when I was making my decision with regard to what I would study at the university. Because I knew that I would like to work for the EU institutions ... I decided to enrol in the European Studies … Then I decided to study in France as I knew I would need the French language for my future career, so I decided to choose the subject of my thesis about France in order to be admitted for studies in France. I can say it was completely planned: my studies, career and subject of my dissertation, boring. (Rozanska 2009:59)

This time I inquired about the changes across time:

> I came five and a half years ago. I worked in the Commission. I wanted to work in the Parliament, and after having worked for four years in the Commission, I sought a job in the Parliament. I found one and I moved to the Parliament and I am very happy about it. (Filip, July 16, 2012, 05:30 p.m.)

I also asked Filip about his "Erasmus" past. He specified he was on the Erasmus exchange in France. When I asked him whether the idea of working in the EU institutions was born during the student exchange, he clarified:

> No, I decided at the beginning of the studies what I wanted to do. I've completed my studies and made a diploma so as to make it easier [laughter]. But, after all, I found it interesting, so it wasn't a problem … And I was aware that I wanted to work on the project "Europe", a nice word, on things related to the European integration. It was not necessary to do it in the institutions, although the institutions gave a certain, good opportunity, and still in Poland I have worked in the field related to the European Union and the Regions, which is my point of interest.

He said I should have inquired about the perception and the image of the Eurocrats in the press articles and in the media. As he stressed, the media were really spreading a very negative, false and unjust image of the Eurocrats.

Kamil

Kamil was one of the interviewees not involved in my former research. We met at the reception desk of the Directorate General he was employed in and went for lunch in the cafeteria in the same building. When he arrived, he introduced himself by the first name only. He was very open and jovial.

He lived in Brussels together with his three-year-old son and his wife, who was studying Development at the *Université Libre de Bruxelles* in French.

At the beginning of his career in Brussels, he was employed in the EU Parliament and as he recalled, the atmosphere there was much more relaxed than in the European Commission. Interestingly, he observed that Poles working in the EU Parliament made a much more coherent group. They were meeting also outside the office hours, while in the EU Commission everything was, according to him, more formal. He also said he attended some

of the Polish meetings at the beginning of his stay in Brussels. However, he had not been yet to a new place - Aloft -[147] where the Polish monthly meetings had moved.

When asked about his way to EU institutions, he replied:

> I passed the AST[148] competition while still studying in Poland. Therefore, the only opportunity for me was the AST category, which does not require any studies. But when I did it, I didn't really hope for some career in the EU institutions as any kind of office work seemed not very attractive for me. When I was studying, I was thinking more about some civil society, NGOs kind of activities, but ... when I passed this competition and when I got the offer, (it was six months after I had finished my studies), I didn't actually hesitate too much taking into account the prospects in Poland, at the Polish labour market in 2004. Yeah, I worked … An interesting job in fact, but the pay was so low, nothing great, and so, I started [working here] in May 2005 as an assistant in the European Parliament in the Secretariat of one of the Parliamentary Committees. I must say that after my studies, I think, it was easy to get in here, I mean, in this period. I was studying International Relations with European specialization, so, I mean, the AST competition was not very hard. (Kamil, July 26, 2012, 01:00 p.m.)

As to the changes across his stay in Brussels, Kamil stressed that with birth of his first child, everything had changed, that nowadays his life was more children oriented and that he and his wife were mostly meeting other friends with children in their free time. After the interview, he added that all his Belgian friends originated either from her University or from Oxfam.

We also talked about children. I asked him about the languages his three - year - old son was learning. He said that at home they spoke Polish, while French was the language used in the *crèche*. Then, I inquired about his future plans as regards schooling of his child. He said he would most probably enrol the boy in the European School - as there was a Polish section, plus the quality of education was high. At the end, he mentioned about the possibility of going back to Poland for the reason of his son's education (similarly as Ula) and own career opportunities (possibly also a political career).

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[147] Aloft Brussels Schuman Hotel- a modern style hotel bar (W XYZ bar) in the European quarter in Brussels. The monthly meeting of Polish EU officials moved to Aloft after Wild Geese was closed for renovation.
[148] Assistant.

Ksawery

Ksawery was another respondent involved in my previous study. After several days from sending him my email asking for participation in the interview part, he kindly proposed to meet during his working hours. We stayed for the interview in his office, as both the cafeteria and the meeting room were full. He shared with me his story:

> As probably you know, I was a typical official from the new member states. First of all, passing a competitive examination and then recruited in 2005. Then I served as a Head of Unit for almost two years and then was transferred to another independent position. Then I was transferred to one of the operational units as a desk officer. So it's a quite typical career for a new member state official. (Ksawery, July 18, 2012, 11:00 a.m.)

During my previous research, when inquired about his way to the EU institutions, whether it was something spontaneous, or a long planned decision, he answered:

> I do not think it was something spontaneous. I had consciousness that drove me to some broader perspective, broader than national, so I used to think of my career as an international career that was not necessarily EU institutions, but it happened that the EU institutions recruited Poles and it happened that I found my way to Brussels, so it was not spontaneous at all. It was planned. Not necessarily EU institutions, but either international or cross border activities. (Rozanska 2009:59)

Adrian

My next interviewee, Adrian was a "new" research participant, but he was a very active person in the Polish community of EU officials. Actually, he was the founder of the Facebook group *Europracownicy* (Euroemployees).

It was fairly difficult to make an appointment with Adrian as he was very busy during his first days after holidays; he agreed to meet only three weeks after I had sent him a written request. We met after work, in Aloft, which he knew well as the Polish meetings were organized there. He was the only person who asked me to send him my questions before the interview.

Here comes his short story:

> Well, I studied International Relations at the University of Warsaw. Initially, my decision to study it was due to the fact that, in the past, I wanted to work in diplomacy. However, while

> the accession was approaching, I became more interested in the European issues. I became an activist of a kind of pre-accession movement – I co-operated with the Schuman's Foundation, but also my Students' Association participated in a certain Polish Forum of Pro-European Youth Organisations, which contributed to the accession of Poland to the European Union. So, I was quite familiar with these issues during the last years of my studies. And, at the moment when we already accessed the EU, the idea came up to work for the EU, for the European Commission. (Adrian, July 19, 2012, 5:45 p.m.)

After the interview, he asked me about my own perception of the EU officials.

Darek

Although my next interviewee, Darek was a "new" research participant, he was a quite active "member" in the community of Polish EU officials. He participated very often in monthly meetings in the Wild Geese, and other cultural events of the Polish EU community.

We had an appointment in front of Old Oak - the place where Polish meetings of the EU officials were organised at the very beginning. Unfortunately, already at the door, my respondent saw a Polish colleague, then, inside, a few more. He felt inconvenient and asked to move to another café situated in the Schuman area. I also had to convince him that he was a valuable source of information for my research.

Here comes the story of my respondent:

> I am a lawyer in the European Commission. I've obviously passed a *concours* for a lawyer's position. Before, I had studied Law in Paris. At the last year of the studies, I studied European Law. When I learnt about the *concours*, it was a natural thing to me to take this challenge and that's how I came to Brussels, end of 2004. (Darek, July 10, 2012, 07:00 p.m.)

When asked why he decided to study European Law, he explained:

> I believe that the EU is a guarantee of peace in Europe. I studied EU Law with an assumption that one day Poland would join the EU and there will be a demand for people who know both Poland and the reality of the pre-existing EU. I've always had this idea in mind that Poland should be helped to find its place in Europe and this was the reason why I studied EU law and then took the *concours*.

At the end of the interview, he offered me a photocopy of some excerpts of "Diaries" by Witold Gombrowicz closely related to the issues of the Polish identity on emigration. He also told me about his intention to organise the "Street's Day". This project would involve

closing the street for one day and organising a kind of street party for the people from the neighbourhood, in order to establish or tighten social contacts.

Bernard

I met my next interviewee, Bernard in front of the European Council in the middle of the week just after his work. He invited me to his favourite winery in the Schuman area, which turned out to be a trendy place, and full of people coming for the after-work drink.

Bernard was one of these interviewees, for whom the career in the EU institutions was long planned: "It had to be long planned because it took so long. It was something very well thought" (July 18, 2012, 06:00 p.m.).

When asked how his life had changed since our last interview (for my former research), he answered he was "very comfortable with [his] life; everything has changed; [He was] just more comfortable, more settled".

Jeremi

The last interviewee, Jeremi, although not involved in my previous study, was another important "member" of the Polish EU community in Brussels, and particularly of its virtual context. Indeed, Jeremi was a very active user of the Internet forum of the Polish EU officials on the web page of *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

It was quite difficult to have an appointment with him. Actually, he responded only a couple of weeks after my email request, due to an important work overload. Even though, the interviewing part of my research had been already finished, I accepted his late reply.

As soon as Jeremi joined me in the hall of the building he worked in, he proposed we called ourselves by first names only. I asked him about his way to employment in the EU institutions in Brussels - whether it was something long planned or a spontaneous decision.

> Yes, it was rather spontaneous. Some background information. I'm a technical person, I'm an IT specialist and in my former job, I was IT specialist in a regional bank in Poland. During internal movements, for half a year, I was assigned to a department that was dealing with internal and external risks and this job was not really related to IT. It was about reading regulations, reading a law, etc., and I was not happy with that job. The internal atmosphere in the department was not good as well, so I told to myself- "Maybe I should think about finding a new job", so I started to read the newspapers about different job proposals and I found an advertisement from the European Commission that a new competition for IT specialists will start soon, so I thought – "okay, maybe I will try, I will see … how it looks like". That was my first concern- how it looks, what are the questions, what is the required knowledge. So, I sent my documents, I enrolled for this competition, and totally unexpectedly, I passed it. So, I was put on the reserve list. After few months, I received some invitations for a job interview. First was in the Council of the European Union. Next month, I received another couple of requests here from the European Commission. The last one was from OLAF[149] and two days after this job interview, I received a call that they offered me a post, so I decided to take it. (Jeremi, October 3, 2012, 02:00 p.m.)

At the end of our conversation, he said I should definitely join the group on FB so that I could always be well informed on Polish events.

4.1.2. Why they are here

With the following set of questions, I tried to find out not only to what extent coming and working in Brussels was due to ideological motivation, but also whether my research participants have developed any genuine interest in staying in Brussels, independently of the employment in the EU institutions.

4.1.2.1. Motivation to come and intention to stay in Brussels

My former research (Rozanska 2009) has shown that, in the light of the "push-pull theories" (Castles 2003), the mobility of the Polish EU officials was typically triggered by "pull factors" such as higher income, professional development and job security. The aforementioned "pull factors" were related to the EU institutions and not to the host country as such. In this sense, the situation of EU staff is, in many respects, similar to the situation of other privileged European movers. This similarity starts with limited mobility choice – in both cases, although the decision to come was triggered by "pull" factors and thus was not

[149] European Anti-Fraud Office.

subject to various economic or security related concerns, the choice of destination was not deliberate, as it was determined by other professional considerations. EU officials, thus also the Polish EU officials, are a (particular) kind of expatriates - usually white collar elites moving to another country in order to take up a specific job with the immediate prospect of settlement. On the other hand, they differ from conventional expatriates in Brussels as their expatriation is usually not temporary - they are often granted life-long employment.

In some cases, their coming to Belgium was triggered by "idealistic" motivation to work for the common good (European integration). Changing lifestyle or staying in an international environment were the most often quoted non-professional reasons. Another frequent reason to migrate - almost exclusively among women - was joining a (non-Polish) partner.

For many of the participants, working for the EU institutions was long-planned and this objective had steered their education path and early career.

As the previous research has shown, despite being granted life-long employment, only a minority of the respondents was convinced to stay permanently in Belgium. Moreover, many of those who had no intention of leaving, had lived in Belgium prior to employment in the EU institutions and their preference to stay was related rather to their private than professional life.

Similarly as it was the case with my original group, when asked about the motivation to migrate to Belgium, not surprisingly, 17 persons out of 30 respondents indicated job related reasons. Some of them answered succinctly that the reason was a successful participation in the EPSO competition, some others referred directly to their attitude to working in the EU institutions ("I always linked my career with the EU"; "I got a very interesting and well paid job at the European Commission"), yet others referred to

professional experience or career opportunities. One of the male respondents pointed also at the "prestigious" character of employment in the EU institutions:

> I was offered an attractive post in the EC (initially for a two-year temporary contract) in 2004. I considered it not only very attractive financially but also very prestigious. I also welcomed the prospect of experiencing life in another country.

Another young male respondent pointed also at something which might actually be considered as a "push factor", namely a high unemployment level in Poland at the time he decided to take part in the competition:

> I passed the competition for EU civil servant and found it a better option than staying in Poland; in 2005 unemployment among young people was high and job prospects were not very optimistic.

For five persons, the main reason to migrate was willingness to live abroad. One of the ladies explained:

> I wanted to live abroad for some period of time and gather work and life experience. I also wanted my children to have such a life experience, to be more open to other people and have more "European self-confidence", and also to learn languages. I was also strongly interested in a possibility to work for the EU.

The studies paths of four persons were oriented directly towards the future employment in the EU institutions (e.g., "My Master's Degree was in European Politics, so I decided to come to Brussels to apply myself"; "I did my studies in the International field, therefore working in Brussels was a 'natural continuation'"). One person out of this group admitted that the main reason for coming to Brussels was the possibility to work in her favourite domain, competition law. Three women followed their partners, while four persons had already lived abroad before.

4.1.2.2. Reasons for taking part in the competition and working in the EU institutions

Interrogated about the reasons for taking part in the EPSO competition and working in the EU institutions, more than a half of my respondents from the new group referred to the

working conditions offered by the employer. Among the most attractive conditions the respondents referred to salary, but also security of employment. Very often, they quoted both of these components ("a good salary and social security"; "Best job opportunity while living in Brussels (money and social security wise)"; "secure work and good salary"). Sometimes, they quoted also flexible or "reasonable" working time, or "mobility and promotion possibilities". Some respondents made a direct comparison to other available work options ("I knew that I would not be able to find back in Poland a better job"; "attractive job conditions at the time of high youth unemployment in Poland").

The ideological reasons were quoted by one-third of the respondents (interestingly, only in three cases this motivation coincided with the financial one). These motivations were differently worded, but usually referred to the possibility of having an impact on reality ("I thought that in the COM[150] the results of my work will have more impact"; "I wanted to have a mission in my job, to do something for others, for the Europeans"), or to beliefs, convictions and political engagement ("I do believe in the European idea"; "I am European federalist"; "I like to work for Europe, I really do believe in it "; "Interests and strong beliefs in the European Integration").

The third most often quoted reason to seek employment in the European Commission was the academic background related to the EU matters, which, in view of my respondents, pre-determined their career. However, this answer is more "technical", as it does not provide information on the reasons for choosing this kind of studies ("[I have] graduated from International relations"; "It was a natural consequence of my university career"; "I did studies in the field of EU"). One of the respondents, building on his studies, was even actively involved in the promotion of Poland accession to the EU:

[150] The abbreviation for the EU Commission.

> I was interested in European integration since the middle of my studies. I completed a Master's programme in European integration, and I actively participated in the promotion of the Poland accession to the EU.

In certain cases, however, the reply was complemented with the motivation for the choice ("I have a degree in European Politics, and so have been interested in the EU since my student days").

Finally, several persons indicated they decided to sit the EPSO exams tempted by a multicultural, international environment or "international atmosphere" they expected to find in the institutions. Some other perceived the EU institutions as "the centre of excellence" or as a place propitious for professional development.

In addition to the abovementioned most popular motivations, several persons quoted more personal reasons, such as "a need for change", the opportunity to stay in Belgium, curiosity or coincidence.

These results must be approached with circumspection. One immediate conclusion one might be tempted to draw is that only a minority joined the institutions out of the ideological motivation. However, it should be kept in mind that, at the moment of the accession of the Eastern- and Central European member states, the EU was not the same organisation as in the 1950s, 1960s or 1970s. In that time, the Common Market was not yet complete, borders were still real and the memories of the war atrocities were vivid. At the beginning of the 21st century, the European Union was already something very real and tangible, especially for people who had interest in the matter. Borders had been long forgotten, new ambitious projects lied on the table. Despite the rejection of the European Constitution, the organisation seemed successful and expansionist. Following the decade of accession preparations associated with strongly pro-European discourse in the Polish press and media, the EU appeared as something almost perfect, the accession was almost considered as "the end of history". In the eyes of the populations of the accessing countries,

and especially those of their elites, the European integration could appear as something as obvious as trivial. Therefore, strong emotional engagement in favour of European integration was probably more difficult than in the era referred to by Bellier (2002), in the same way that the choice of the career in the national civil service in, say, Italy, is probably rarely motivated by the enthusiasm for the unity of Italy, democracy or the constitutional order. On the other hand, as it was already mentioned, attachment to the institutions of the EU and its objectives may develop after the recruitment, as a result of the "*engrenage*". This is even more likely given the growing criticism towards the institutions (and their employees) of which my research participants are aware (see section 4.2).

As to those, whose answers pointed at the ideological motivation, such statements also need to be approached with caution. The question referred to the motivation for something that happened in the past - the answers may be based on inaccurate memories, they may even be projections of the current state of mind of my respondents. Finally, they may also be affected by their intention to manipulate their image.

4.1.2.3. Motivation to stay or leave Belgium and the EU institutions

The question was asked to both the "new group" and the "follow-up group". The pattern of responses was broadly similar.

In the new group (30 persons), only seven persons were convinced to stay in Belgium, 16 persons did not know what they would do in the future; while seven were convinced to leave. In the follow-up group, only three persons (out of 20) planned to leave Belgium, while 11 did not know it yet and six were convinced they would stay in Belgium.

When asked about the intention of leaving the EU institutions one day, all answers from the new group but four were compatible with intentions of leaving the country.[151] A woman who said she was not going to "leave" the EU institutions explained: "But I am planning to use my unpaid leave and from time to time leave for up to a couple of years, go back and forth between Brussels and other places plus I want to do things aside from EU work when in Brussels (academic career?)". One of the ladies who were unsure if they leave the institutions added: "If I leave, it will most likely be for a sabbatical".

While asking my respondents from the follow up group (only) if they would consider staying in Belgium after leaving the EU institutions. Six of them confirmed, eight would not do it and six "did not know it yet".

Although an important part of the respondents was not sure to stay in Belgium and in the EU institutions, it should be noted that very few declared their intention to leave. The strategies of persons who admit the possibility to stay (even without being sure) – thus having no plans for further mobility, considering Belgium as their possible final destination - must be very different from the attitudes of those who are convinced they will leave – which is the case of the majority of mobile professionals (expatriates).

4.1.3. Their spaces

To understand the overall mode of functioning of the Polish EU officials in Brussels, and more specifically, to see with whom and at what occasion they may actually be in contact, it is important to examine the spaces they have created and occupy in the new environment. Only then it will be possible to understand what it actually means for them to "live in Brussels".

[151] Two persons who did not plan to leave Belgium, answered they did not know if they would leave the institutions one day; a person who did not know yet if she would leave the country, answered she would leave the institutions, while another one, who was also hesitating, answered she would never leave the institutions.

4.1.3.1. Insignificant role of the Polish Church

According to Leman (1997, 2000), attending the Polish mass constituted an important aspect of life of the previous wave of Polish (undocumented, labour) migrants in Belgium. As the scholar explains, "what these migrants seek in their church is the 'atmosphere of home' or 'the native region'" (Leman 1997:37). The "Polish" church played a role as an important driver of integration of the Polish community (see e.g., Leman 1997, 2000; Siewiera 1995; Grzymała-Kazłowska 2001b, 2005). Not only could the Poles in Brussels attend Sunday mass in their maternal language, but they could also obtain assistance, legal advise and moral support (Grzymała-Kazłowska 2005:686; Siewiera 1995:100). The church was also the first destination for the newcomers, where they could find important information including possibilities of employment opportunities in Belgium (Grzymała-Kazłowska 2001b:32; 2005:686; Leman 1997:36). It supported the Polish ethnic identity, propagated Polish culture, customs and language (Grzymała-Kazłowska 2001b; 2005:686), but also facilitated social life. The Polish Catholic Mission provided Polish children with schooling, had its own library and video rental (Grzymała-Kazłowska 2005:686). Moreover, it offered them free French courses, organized both religious and clearly entertaining events but also meetings for the group of support for Anonymous Alcoholics (Grzymała-Kazłowska 2001b:32; 2005:686).

During my previous research (Rozanska 2009), 12 out of 30 persons admitted attending Catholic mass (four out of the remaining 18 who did not go to church, were Catholics). Eight persons attended exclusively Polish sermons, while four research participants indicated both Polish and Belgian masses.

As concerns the new research group, eleven persons admitted attending Polish masses (out of this group, one person declared attending also Belgian mass). Another male respondent explained he was not Catholic; yet another man said he was not attending the mass, because they are frequented by whole families and he found it strange to go there

alone. One woman said she was “not religious”, while another explained she was atheist.

Overall, it seems that the “Polish church” does not play an important role for the Polish EU officials. This can be partly explained with a general decrease of importance of religion for young urban people in the EU.

It seems that (especially) in the time I conducted my previous study, some of the roles of the “Polish Church” in facilitating adjustment to the new environment, (e.g., source of information and moral support) have been replaced by modern forms of virtual social networking, including the forum of *Gazeta Wyborcza* and the internal “EPS” mailing list (Rozanska 2009, 2011). These networks, established in the virtual space, were further extended to real social meetings (e.g., the monthly gatherings of the Polish EU officials in Irish pub - Wild Geese), and allowed the Polish officials to keep strong relations among themselves. The Polish EU officials created a kind of situational community - they were all at the beginning of their stay abroad, sharing a similar professional situation and suffering the same social limitations due to the negative attitude of other Poles and Belgians. Such factor as for example, being “lost” in the new “world” of EU institutions and the new place of living at the same time have undoubtedly tightened the ties between them.

However, there were also some of them, who did not feel the need of “being together” with their compatriots, as they simply felt at ease among other Europeans just as among Poles.

4.1.3.2. Meeting places of the Polish EU institutions community

As Suvarierol remarks, the newcomers often find opportunities for social insertion thanks to national clubs and networks (2009:421). These clubs and networks naturally facilitate exchange between the more experienced officials and the newcomers, also thanks to shared language and culture (Suvarierol 2009:412). The regular (and ritual) meetings at the Irish Pub

Wild Geese were described in my previous study, as one of the central institutions of the Polish EU officials' life in Brussels (Rozanska 2009; see also Rozanska 2011).

The Polish EU civil servants seem to attend completely different social spaces in their free time than other categories of Polish migrants in Brussels. During the interview and while talking about typically Polish spaces in Brussels, Jeremi mentioned a recently opened Polish restaurant *Pokusa* (Temptation). He pointed at a huge mental gap between the two categories of Poles in Brussels resulting in these two groups having rather separated spaces they frequent in their free time. As he explained, the labour migrants have a pub called *Żubr* (Bison) and some other bars, and a discotheque in Anderlecht (Amnesia), whereas the Polish EU community has their own meetings in Aloft, after the Wild Geese was permanently closed. According to Jeremi, Aloft was a completely different type of place: it was a hotel bar with an open space (with no separated rooms as it was the case in Wild Geese) and that, according to him, could apparently facilitate contacts. Another important change was that nowadays these meetings were organized on Thursdays instead of Fridays, and therefore, they also ended earlier than before.

My next interviewee, Beniamin, mentioned that the access to Polish shops or Polish restaurants was not important to him. He was aware there was a Polish bar serving dumplings in Anderlecht (although he would not go there just to purchase Polish dumplings). He also knew about the Polish bar in front of EU Parliament (*Fleur d'Europe,* called also *"U Pani Basi"*) and a new restaurant (*Pokusa*) in the Merode neighbourhood. However, he had never been there.

As to the original monthly meetings of the Polish EU officials (of which he was not really a fan) Beniamin observed that, especially at their final stage, they were gathering "people of another type", and that almost everybody was admitted. In Aloft people were dressed more formally and he found the ambience of the place more attractive. However, he

simply did not like work oriented social meetings as he did not want to meet his colleagues outside the working hours. He also said that although most of his friends worked in the EU institutions, they were not employed in the same Directorate General.

As the profile of these meetings, so important for newcomers, has changed recently, I decided to discuss it with the former organizer in order to have "first hand" information. In fact, there was a recent "appointment" of a new organizer, a woman not employed in the EU institutions.

Adrian pointed at a different character of the meetings in Aloft:

> it cannot be compared with Wild Geese, not at all. And I think that also the persons who were attending these meeting at the beginning, I mean the persons who were coming to Old Oak I could see, at least some of them, still in Wild Geese. They do not attend these meetings anymore. I have never seen those from Old Oak in Aloft, not a single time, while I could see them from time to time in Wild Geese. (Adrian)

He explained the sinking popularity of these meetings in a following way:

> I just think that people got simply bored with this formula. Once they got to know people, if they want to meet with them, they can simply do it somewhere else. I think it was a question of time. … They have their circles of friends, they are integrated, and do not feel the need to come and get to know new people. They just do keep an occasional contact with some of these people, but I think that it is for those who came here as this most important wave, around 2005-2007 or 2008, we can say, this wave has felt so "at home" in Brussels that they do not feel this need for meeting any more. (Adrian)

I also asked Filip, if he thought there was any source of support for the current day newcomers similar to the forum of *Gazeta Wyborcza* for the first wave of Polish EU officials in Brussels. I remembered he had mentioned in the past that prior to coming to Belgium some people already knew each other from the list. I wanted to know whether these newcomers were now left without a similar support. He did not answer this question explicitly, but suggested that this kind of support is no longer necessary:

> You know, I have the impression that everyone coming to Brussels already knows someone. I do not know to what extent it is true that because there are so many Poles, everybody knows someone. That is why there are not so many completely new people here; and when someone like that happens, I get to know that person because he or she would have already known someone from University or from a previous job in Poland, and while coming here, such a person always has someone who would introduce him to the environment of Polish EU officials. (Filip)

During several years of my participant observation in the Polish EU officials' gatherings in Brussels, I realised that, in addition to the monthly meetings (in Wild Geese or Aloft), there were also other "Polish" events usually attracting the representatives of the researched group. This is notably the case of Polish ambulant theatre of the famous director Krzysztof Warlikowski – the performances in Liège regularly host a significant number of Polish spectators, including many EU officials, but also diplomatic staff and other highly skilled Polish professionals – but also of occasional spectacles of Polish amateur theatre in Brussels involving many eurocratic actors. Performances of the first type are rather expensive and require a certain awareness of the cultural agenda of Belgium or Poland, as the tickets are often difficult to buy. The latter, advertised in the local Polish newspapers, attracted also a certain number of economic migrants from Podlasie. However, despite opportunities for networking during the *entracts,* I saw rather few interaction between the two groups. Even more popular are screenings of Polish films – I met plenty of my research participants, as well as other Polish EU officials e.g., at the screening of Andrzej Wajda's "Katyń", as well as at the festival of the Visegrad cinema (embracing Polish, but also other Eastern European cinema).

4.1.3.3. The Virtual Community of Polish EU officials in Brussels

In my former study I abundantly described the first EU institution-employment-related forum on the *Gazeta Wyborcza*[152] website, as well as the "EPS" list – the emailing list of Polish EU officials (Rozanska 2009). I was curious to know if these important institutions of the Polish officials' life in Brussels were still crucial in their social life.

Interrogated on the forum of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Adrian explained that he had not participated in that forum for several years as it was simply easier to send an email to

[152] The biggest Polish non-tabloid daily newspaper.

someone than to go to *Wyborcza* web page. Knowing that the forum of *Gazeta Wyborcza* constituted a source of advice and support for the first wave of Polish EU officials in Brussels, I asked if there was something similar for current newcomers. Adrian answered:

> For sure there is no similar thing; however, I think that many questions, or a contact group has appeared on Facebook. By contrast, in the moment when the list has appeared, meaning the forum of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Facebook was already there in the U.S., but it hasn't been yet in Poland. ... So, I have the impression that Facebook or other social portals have overtaken an important part of it. I know that there was another similar group on *Grono.*[153] However, there are nowadays less people who come, at least (much less) among the Eurocrats. It is true that they do not have similar initial support as the first wave did. (Adrian)

Regarding the intrusion of other categories of Polish migrants in Brussels on the Forum of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Adrian added:

> You know there were several such individuals; some of them I even knew personally, and what is even more funny, one of those attacking (I cannot reveal his identity though, as he would probably shoot me, literally) - for instance, his wife works for the institutions, while he is very active in attacking us, at least he was several years ago. I think, the word "parasites" was one of the nicest words, which he would apply with reference to us. I do not know why this guy has such a need to express himself. (Adrian)

Then I asked Adrian to elaborate more on a recent group *Polscy Europracownicy* (Polish Euro-employees) that was created on Facebook on January 16, 2008:

> Actually, I have founded this [Polish] "Euro-employees" group on Facebook and I allow everybody to join it. I do not care if the person works for the EU or not. I have just ascertained that if someone feels the need to be in this group, I do not have anything against[154] … Likewise, I was in favor of opening the "EPS" list, (which was created for the EU institutions employees), to the outside to make it accessible for everyone who was interested. Since we talk about different issues there, like for instance:"I am selling a washing machine", or "I am going to Poland and I can carry something for you", … just to give some examples. I do not see any reason why it could not be opened for people from other groups, from other works. The question was even submitted to voting, and it seems that three-fourth or two-third were against of expanding this "network" while one-third voted for extension. It is really a pity, but at least I am happy that it was a democratic choice of the entire group. The arguments against were quite ridiculous as for instance "I do not want extension for the teachers of European Schools, as I can gossip on them". This is completely ridiculous given that we have around 1250 persons on that group and I am pretty sure that if someone sees a surname of a given person, he will further pass this information to that person. So, it is a kind of fictitious protection. Many people pass also emails and so on ... (Adrian)

During my previous research I realized that one of the crucial tools for development of ties between the members of the Polish Community was the "EPS" Google list (Rozanska

[153] Grono.net was a Polish virtual social network pre-existing Facebook.
[154] Previously, there was another group on Facebook that included only EU officials, but it was suspended.

2009). More than 1400 EU officials received, every day, loads of messages related to practicalities of life in Brussels, but also other topics, very often political or related to "*faits divers*". The Polish EU officials' virtual community is formed by people in broadly similar life situation which, given their busy life (as it will be mentioned later, most of them either worked overtime or had small children), cannot afford more time consuming forms of maintaining ties. Furthermore, it is not particularly specialized, as it relies on the exchange of information and opinions on very diverse subject and performs multiple roles. Indeed, the latter are not limited to support and advice, as the list actually organized the "community life" of the Polish EU officials in Brussels.

Seven years after its creation, the "EPS" Google list seemed still very popular among the Polish EU institutions' employees. Only two persons out of 21 interviewees expressed less enthusiastic views. Another person indicated he did not use it often and personally got no useful reply, but still admitted it may be useful. One woman was no longer a member, although she considered the list an important source of information. Many respondents expressed sheer enthusiasm.

During the interviews I questioned several persons, who were more involved in the virtual networking of the Polish EU community. Therefore, I asked Adrian to develop more on the response he had given in the questionnaire about the main source of information as regards daily practicalities (e.g., looking for a doctor or a plumber). At that time he pointed at the Polish community, which as he further explained included: "Polish list, but also these contacts, I mean, that I know that someone [who] sometimes has done something at home and I would contact him directly". When asked, if he meant the Polish "EPS" list, he confirmed it was certainly a very important source of information.

During the interview, Beniamin mentioned that he actually found the community of Polish EU officials to be very well integrated and stronger than the community of the

previous categories of Polish migrants thanks to the "EPS" list. He considered it as a very important tool of integration of the Polish community. He said the conversations were still very vivid there. On the other hand, some respondents, as for instance Ula, admitted they still used the "EPS" list but considered it rather as an important source of information than of support:

> Yes. As source of information yes and I use it. Not very often, but sometimes of course, but not as support ... This is what they complain about, that we use it now as source of information and not as group itself, but for me - as group - I have friends. For information - this is what I need them for. (Ula)

4.1.4. Conclusions on "Who they are", "Why they are here" and "their spaces"

Looking at the profiles and life histories of my interviewees, it seems obvious that their way to the institutions cannot be reduced to a simple model mentioned by several scholars consisting in pre-socialisation in the College of Europe, or a similar institution, or during a traineeship in an EU institution (Abélès et al. 1993; Ban 2009; Hooghe 2005; Shore 2000; Suvarierol 2011). Although many of them, indeed, admitted having planned their EU career and prepared for the *concours* in advance, for many of them it was merely an option. Others approached it as an opportunity they tried to seize when it appeared, without being long-planned or considered as a career path to follow. Certain women had already been in Brussels for other reasons, some of them followed their partners. Many (but not all) had had prior international experience, either at university or in a professional career.

The trajectories of their mobility, in many cases, illustrate the contemporary trend by their complexity: some left Poland for studies in France or the UK before arriving in Brussels, sometimes returning to Poland or working abroad before their current assignment. Some spent time in Brussels before leaving and subsequently returning. Although we may assume, following the experience of other EU officials, that their arrival in Brussels marks the end of their movement and can be qualified, after Van Amersfoort (1998), as a

"permanent" migration, it must be noted that some of my interviewees do not exclude leaving Brussels someday. Indeed, coming to Belgium is not always perceived as a one-off movement, and uncertainty as to the actual length of their stay may influence their attitude to a new country and their determination to integrate. Only very few envisaged staying in Belgium despite leaving the institutions, which seems to indicate a rather low level of attachment to Belgium itself. The biggest group was not yet sure how long they were going to stay and envisaged the possibility of leaving the job one day. Certainly, this is still in contrast with the state of mind of typical expatriates coming for a short or middle-term contract. Some authors have explained their findings concerning expatriates' unwillingness or difficulty in integrating by the short term perspective of their stay (see e.g., Amit 2007; Butcher 2009; E. Cohen 1977; Favell 2008a; Gatti 2009; Kennedy 2009). In the case of my research participants, independently of what they will actually do in the future, this factor cannot be present, as they mostly admit a possibility of staying for an important part of their life. Most probably (although this could not be verified in my research), this is also their perception by the Brussels' population.

Their declared motivations are often idealistic, but even more often they are financial or professional. These motivations are not mutually exclusive. With all necessary caveats (see above), one may cautiously assume that the pattern broadly corresponds to the findings of Abélès et al. (1993), Ban (2013) and Bellier (2002). Some of my respondents were not able to clearly specify the reason for their career choice.

Similar to other groups of Poles in Belgium, the Eurocrats have their own spaces in which they interact with each other. Unlike in the case of previous groups, however, this space is not organised around the church (for this, see Leman 1997, 2000; Siewiera 1995; Grzymała-Kazłowska 2001b, 2005), but takes the form of organised regular meetings and virtual communities. Professional identification seems to play an important role in the

creation of these spaces, as they are normally reserved for Poles working in the institutions (although outsiders are tolerated). The most complete of these virtual "communities", the "EPS"-google-list, performs broadly the same functions as the church for previous groups of Polish migrants.

These ritualised meetings (both monthly and occasional) and participation in Internet-based exchanges coin common experience, common histories and establish common places and points of reference. All these elements, considered by Amit (2002b:18) as necessary for the formation of a community, are there. Moreover, as I realised during the participant observation, there seems to be a sense of common interest (Overing and Rapport 2005) and emotional links, sense of belonging among the Polish EU officials. I could observe it, for instance, during the meeting in the "Wild Geese" organised between the Polish EU officials and a popular Polish writer who had written a novel depicting (in quite negative tones) their life in Brussels. They were truly shocked and angry because of what they understood as a calumnious pamphlet and asked the author for explanations.

If the gathering around the "Polish" church by the previously studied groups of Polish "economic" migrants, frequenting "Polish" discos and bars (such as "Amnesia" or already mentioned "Pokusa") and buying in Polish shops could be interpreted as an attempt to re-create "Polish" spaces in Brussels, based on the memories of "home" in Poland, it seems that the way the Polish EU officials create and use their spaces has more to do with their current situation and status. Looking at the successive locations of the monthly meetings, it appears that their character evolved reflecting the strategies adopted by the group. It started as a purely Polish gathering of a strongly integrated and not very numerous group of EU officials in a Belgian bar ("Chez Bernard"). As the group grew, meetings were progressively becoming more anonymous, but still kept the character of integrative meetings, with people sitting around tables in dedicated areas of Irish pubs ("Old Oak" and then "Wild Geese"). At

a certain point, the EU officials opted for a more "expat place", "Aloft", much more expensive (and thus exclusive in terms of frequentation), with a lot of open space encouraging interaction with other expats. The choice and character of places selected for construction of social spaces corresponded with the types of boundaries that structured these spaces: Irish pubs did not have a local character, they were not really much more Irish than Belgian and thus they constituted a "neutral", "cosmopolitan" space, slightly like Brussels, well suited to be filled with new meanings for a construction of Polish-eurocratic social space. Belgium was left behind the door. However, Polish people not working in the EU also came to these pubs, as well as Belgians and other migrants. Their possible interference was remedied by moving to "Aloft". In the same time, this new location enabled opening to other highly skilled mobile professionals and other (non-Polish) EU officials.

The virtual spaces of Polish EU officials were subject to similar evolution. The initial open forum hosted on the website of a popular daily newspaper. However, in order to prevent access of Polish speaking persons not working in the EU institutions, the Polish EU officials switched to professional email based google-group ("EPS-list"). This virtual space is dedicated to life in Brussels and related practical advice, but also enables discussions on general issues and various forms of interaction. In no way can it be considered as a refuge for homesick people trying to feel like in the "old country".

4.2. The perception of the host environment: Poles in Brussels, local society and space

One of my respondents, inquired about integration in Brussels, answered with a question: what actually is there to integrate with? This question – approached from the perspective of my research participants - is a good point of departure for my reflection on the integration of the Polish EU officials in Brussels. What is their perception of the local context (the city), the local society and its different segments?

As my research concerned exclusively the Polish EU officials and I have not made independent studies on different communities inhabiting Brussels I will focus on the way my respondents understand "local" while referring to the "local culture", the "local society", etc. Although the perceptions of my interviewees and respondents slightly vary (as it can be read between the lines of the accounts below), the most common understanding of "the local" seems to refer to the "core" of the Belgian society, thus French and Dutch speaking Europeans.

However, the host environment is not limited to the locals (in the sense: Belgians). Special attention must be paid to Poles inhabiting Brussels and to other expatriates or EU officials, to see if, as Eriksen (2007) mentioned it, my research participant can be tempted to integrate to the "*Gemeinschaft*" rather than to the "*Gesellschaft*", for instance a Polish ethnic community.

4.2.1. Brussels

For the analysis of the adaptation, integration or identifications of Polish EU officials in Brussels, it appears necessary to also take into account the specific character of the city (its international, expat oriented character; difficulty to define the meaning of "the local"; complex linguistic issues with English as expatriates' language) as yet another factor enabling creation and maintenance of boundaries between the local population and international strata of the city.

4.2.1.1. Perception of Brussels: before and after arrival

In the collective consciousness of Europeans, Brussels stands above all for the capital of Europe, more than a capital of Belgium (Shore 2000:154; Bellier 2002:78; Favell 2008a:46). This perception is likely to be even more natural if one settles in the city in order to work in

the EU institutions. The attitude to Brussels certainly affects adaptation and integration of expatriates and EU officials settling in the city. I assumed that the trajectory of these attitudes might also be relevant: whether it is the way from great expectations to disappointment, distaste and ultimate rejection or, on the contrary, from a negative stereotype to discovery of unexpected strengths and opportunities (or any shade of grey inbetween).

During my former research (Rozanska 2009), I inquired my respondents about their perception of Brussels, before and after the settlement in order to examine to what extent their preconceptions have changed. The previous study revealed that the majority of the respondents initially had some views about Brussels. Out of those who declared having no opinion at the outset, four oficials have developed a positive attitude to Brussels, while two persons have evolved into a negative attitude out of a neutral or inexistent one. The officials having a prior view on the city counted both those (six persons) who declared having originally a positive image of Brussels, which had subsequently turned into a negative one and those (four persons) who evolved into a positive attitude out of an originally negative one. Four further respondents out of this group maintained their initially positive perception. If the respondents who had only a very general opinion on the city before their settlement often used positive imaginaries to describe it, such as “the capital of Europe”, “the heart of Europe”, “international city”, “a cosmopolitan city” or “a big metropolis”, those who had already visited Brussels expected, at the arrival, an “awful, small, dirty”, “boring”, “strange, ugly and unpleasant city”, where “people didn’t want to speak English”. The positive image at the arrival gave place to the impressions of a city which is “colourless and boring” “stinking, dirty, humid and depressing, where everyday life is difficult and has no charm”, “overpopulated by people living out of social security, dirty, badly organized in terms of parking facilities, bad customer service”, “overregulated, inefficient on each level of administration, managed in incoherent manner by crowd of officials”, “way behind other

European capitals (countries) in terms of cleanness, living conditions, quality of services, etc. (quality of life in general)". By contrast, officials whose opinion was initially negative or neutral often happened to change their mind and see Brussels as "nice to live", very comfortable to live, with lots of calm and green areas but still with many opportunities, "nice city, with lots of interesting places and nice, smiling people", "my hometown". Some respondents, were surprised with its size and the atmosphere of a small town.

Three years later, I asked the same questions to the new research group. Seven out of 30 respondents admitted that their perception of Brussels had evolved towards a more negative one. In certain cases, the criticism expressed was pretty strong. In case of one respondent, it focused on the functioning of public authorities: "I am disappointed with the Belgian administration and the way things are dealt with (high taxes,[155] high unemployment, lack of safety in Brussels)". Two other respondents pointed at the poor security of the capital city: "I thought it was an interesting place to live in. I was disappointed by the lack of security and the level of crime in the city". In case of some others, it did not refer to any particular aspect of Belgian reality, but referred to a contrast with higher expectations they had come with: "Then, THE heart of Europe (in every aspect). Now, changed a lot; nothing special". Someone complained, that he had expected a "bigger and more developed town". Another respondent stated that he thought "Brussels, and Belgium more in general, is much better organised as regards different services", while "the reality proved somewhat different". He added he "also didn't expect that there are so many tensions between the Flemish and the Wallonians".

Needless to add that these opinions should not be considered as a source of information about Brussels as such, and do not even necessarily need to reflect the actual experience of my respondents. However, they correspond to their perception of the place they

[155] Although the EU officials do not pay the Belgian income tax on their salaries (instead, they pay a tax directly to the EU budget), they do pay other Belgian taxes, like VAT (including on real property), vehicle tax, household tax, etc.

inhabit. This perception may be based on the difference between the expectations and their actual impression of the reality, on comparisons with what they remember as the situation in places where they lived or visited before (and that they consider as a relevant point of reference), on accounts of other people (e.g., colleagues from their institutions) or on press and media reports (and the Polish EU officials, as my research has shown, do follow the events in Belgium, at least to a certain extent). Those who have never had intensive interaction with Belgian people, could forge their opinion on e.g., the relations between the linguistic "communities" in Brussels on the basis of the lengthy and mediatic conflict around the proposed split of the Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde electoral circuit generating loads of harsh reciprocal criticim between the politicians of the two linguistic groups.

Poor organisation, low level of services and the lack of safety constitute a recurring reason for criticism, although they are sometimes outweighed with the easygoing nature of the inhabitants and the international character of the city. One respondent wrote: "I thought it is a multilingual and multicultural environment and this has been confirmed. I expected Bxl[156] to be safer than it is. I am also surprised on how low is the level of services (in general) offered to consumers (banks, restaurants, public transport, telephony, etc.)". Another one, in the same vein, confessed: "I expected Brussels to be better organized, cleaner (used to live in Germany before). I didn't consider the bad weather aspect which seems to be quite crucial for me right now. I knew it would be international". It should be mentioned that the negative perception of the quality of services in Brussels was shared by the huge majority of the participants. Most of them, as it was mentioned before, had international experience before coming to Belgium. Some of my research participants previously lived in the UK, Germany, France or Italy. However, also for participants coming to Belgium directly from Poland the difference in quality of services was striking. Many lived, at least for some time,

[156] Brussels.

in Warsaw, which is a bigger city than Brussels and which has, over the last years, substantially developed or refurbished its infrastructure and curbed criminality.

One woman was surprised both in a positive and in a negative manner:

> I thought it was a nice city and this perception has not changed. I was only surprised to see that Belgians are quite relaxed, open to other people and they like to enjoy/taste their life. And this is reflected in Brussels. I only expected that the city, in particular services, would be better organized.

However, one respondent seemed to have serious doubts even as concerns the multicultural aspect: "I didn't have a clear idea, besides being multicultural city. It's more segregated than I thought (different groups – EU, Belgians, immigrants from Maghreb and Congo – not mingling too much) and less safe".

Another research participant who admitted having mixed feelings referred to tolerance on one side and the lack of safety on the other:

> Before coming to Brussels, I just saw the city centre on postcards. After coming here, I discovered the city in depth, and I find it very diverse architecturally and culturally. On one side it's a very tolerant and well developing, and on the other rather filthy and might give the impression of being dangerous.

A number of respondents (12) simply said that they had no previous knowledge about Brussels at the moment of arrival. Seven of them did not share any information concerning their first and subsequent impressions. Those who did (two), told "positive" stories, although with a bit of criticism: "I did not think much of Brussels before coming here. Since coming here, I have realised that BXL is a nice place to live, although it would be a very provincial EU capital if it wasn't for the EU and NATO being headquartered here". One of the female participants confessed:

> I did not know huge amounts about Brussels before coming – I knew it was fairly small and very international in terms of people who lived and worked here. Once I settled here, I realised that it was a very comfortable place to be (possibility to walk to work; very good standard of living as compared to other big capitals – affordable great food and beautiful flats). What surprised me, in comparison to living in the UK, that foreigners often live here as if in an "international bubble" and do not assimilate and become "part" of the country (in terms of closely following the politics and other developments, knowing a lot of local people) as it usually is the case in other countries.

Interestingly, one woman from this sub-group stated that even though she "knew the place

more", she "still often feel[s] [she]'s living on 'Europlanet' rather than Brussels".

Finally, several respondents (four) had had clearly negative pre-conceptions about Brussels which have subsequently evolved into a positive view. One of the men put it in a following manner: "before: boring western city, far, far away. Now: a melting pot, a lot of opportunities to meet new people, city which "never sleeps", every day there is something new to see". Another respondent had even been ready to face difficulties which luckily failed to materialise: "I was expecting some problems everyone warned me against, but personally everything went well, so if my perception has changed it was from neutral to very positive".

More importantly, certain respondents (3) had visited Brussels before their appointment and got a very negative impression of Brussels at their first contact with the city. This impression subsequently was replaced by a more positive assessment. One of the respondents said:

> My first impressions of Brussels were from a 6-week traineeship in 1999. I remembered Brussels as somewhat grey and dirty, slightly depressing. But my perception has changed completely since we settled here (first for a brief period of one year 2004-2005, interrupted by a 3-year stay in Luxembourg, and back to Brussels in 2008). I consider Brussels to be a very pleasant city to live in.

Similarly, one of the male participants recalled:

> I knew Brussels a bit before (I had a *stage* here in 2004). First impressions were not too positive (dirty, a lot of construction works going on, weather…) but after some [time] I think everybody can discover one's own place. In fact every district has its ambience, and there is a lot of difference among them, so there is something for everybody.

One female respondent with no preconceived ideas about Brussels prior to arrival, referred to her first impression and the subsequent evolution: "I knew nothing about it; I was a bit shocked after getting out at the Central Station but now I really like it".

Altogether, the number of respondents having negative pre-conceptions subsequently changed after arrival is roughly similar to the number of those who felt disappointed after settling in Brussels. Most of the respondents expected the city to be international, multicultural and cosmopolitan: ("I thought it is a multilingual and multicultural environment

and this has been confirmed"; "I knew it will be international"), and only a few were subsequently disappointed on this particular point. On the other hand, many expected the city to be better organized and offering better quality of services. Those who had negative preconceptions usually perceived Brussels to be "boring", "dirty" and "gloomy".

4.2.1.2. Book of complaints and compliments about Belgium

Once in Belgium, my respondents have developed differing attitudes to the country, enjoying certain aspects and suffering from others. I was interested in these attitudes, as factors potentially contributing to their relationship with the city and hence – their adaptation.

I asked the same question during my previous research (Rozanska 2009), three years earlier. The feature considered as the major advantage of Brussels by the highest number of respondents was its central location followed by "multicultural environment" or "international environment" or a similar concept. Many persons referred also to work in the EU institutions and higher salaries, as well as the quality of life, (notably the "relax way of living", availability of quality food and green areas), higher standard of living and "friendly" and "open-minded" people. However, one might wonder whether these last observations referred to all inhabitants of Brussels or only to the international strata of the city, given that, as evidenced elsewhere, the contact of EU officials with Belgians was rather limited.

As to the disadvantages, respondents usually referred to poor quality of services, "shops' opening hours", "generally poor living conditions" or weather. Many persons mentioned homesickness and distance from friends and family.

During the current research, I asked the new respondents about the three most positive and the three most negative aspects of the city. As to the advantages, as much as 20 out of 30 persons referred to the geographical location of Belgium. Explanations were very brief and focused on the central location in Europe, easy access to other European destinations and

good transport connections. Although this advantage does not relate specifically to opportunities offered by Brussels, but rather to easy access to opportunities offered by other countries, one of the respondents referred also to the fact that Belgium is a "small country – you can get to the seaside/mountains in less than 2 hrs." It is interesting that most of the positive opinions focused on the aspects which are typically important to expatriates.[157] The strategic location of Brussels is an important advantage if one reasons in one- or two-years perspective, but it would nevertheless be unusual for most of the people looking for the place to settle permanently to consider the opportunities for weekend travelling as an important criterion. This may be explained by the fact that most of my respondents had lived in Belgium only for a couple of years. Also my husband and I, as well as many of our friends employed in the institutions, travelled frenetically during the first couple of years, visiting probably every cathedral in the perimeter of 300 kilometers. But since then, the urge to "profit" from the travelling opportunities offered by the new location has faded away.

Twelve respondents referred to the multicultural character of the city, although they worded it in various manners: sometimes referring to it directly ("multiculturalism of Brussels"; "multicultural environment with lots of things going on"), other referred to its "international" aspect ("very international (mostly thanks to institutions)"; "international atmosphere") or to the presence of expats and foreigners ("large expat community"; "it's easy to be a foreigner in Brussels", more indirectly: "easy access to 'exotic' things – like music, culture, food"). As Adrian elaborated on this topic during the interview:

> [the advantage of living in Brussels is related] probably to multiculturalism, and above all to the presence of expats. Or also this, for instance, that I can go to Ethiopian restaurant or that I live close to a pizzeria run by Sicilians, or that I have easy access to Japanese sushi. It offers me a greater opportunity to choose, so it also gives me a wider access to culture of different countries, it is for sure also very interesting. (Adrian)

Again, the importance attached to the international, "cosmopolitan" character of Brussels may suggest the attitude of my respondents to integration: they are definitely more interested

[157] On the expatriates' opinions, see: Favell (2008a:52).

in the adaptation to the city with its multi-cultural inhabitants than in any kind of deeper integration with Belgians. Again, the formulations they used while describing the advantages of Brussels read as if they were describing some kind of Disneyland, focusing on leisure activities and the possibility of living among affluent foreigners – which is a perfectly legitimate perspective but, again, rather characteristic for expatriates.

However, the foreigners-friendly climate was also sometimes attributed to the character of Belgians. According to one of the women, Brussels is "easy to settle, given a number of other international employees in Brussels, and given great language skills of Belgians and their apparent patience with all the incoming foreigners". Another female respondent referred to "tolerant and open people", one of the men to "liberal society", while yet another one praised a "tolerant, open society, at least in Brussels". Perceived strengths of the Belgian nature were not limited to their tolerance and the attitude towards foreigners: one person considered that "Belgians are relaxed and easy going", while the woman who praised the city for its "tolerant and open people" also added that "most people are helpful and friendly".

In line with the findings of Favell (2008a:126-129; 2001a:39-49), a significant number of respondents (eight) quoted the "quality of life" as one of the most important strengths of living in Brussels.[158] Such references included "relatively high standard and comfort of living", or "high quality of life, at least for me and people I know". Some Polish EU officials elaborated slightly more, explaining what they meant: "comfort of life - bigger

[158] Favell uses this term with regard to the relation between the cost of living on one hand and the services, opportunities and other benefits the place of living offers on the other (2008a:120). In fact, as the research performed by the scholar shows, the respondents considered the city as very affordable (in comparison to other European cities) and, in the same time, boasting good facilities, with quality cultural life, well developed public transport, easy access to work and outside the city and "village-like, yet wholly urbane, cosmopolitan city lifestyle" (Favell 2008a:120). Moreover, "the location of the city [was perceived] as a huge factor in their happiness with the city" (Favell 2008a:52). However, as he further suggests, in case of EU *fonctionnaires*, it is not really the quality of life which attracts them to Brussels, but rather the lucrative and secure terms of their employment and their "commitment to working for the EU" (Favell 2001a:35). This is what might result in a weaker engagement of EU officials with the city, as compared to other "free movers" (Favell 2001a:35).

apartments, less blocks of flats, smaller city, easier to get around (compared to Warsaw)"; "very good standard of living (affordable great food and beautiful apartments) – cheaper than some other big capitals". Some people, although they did not explicitly refer to "quality" or "standard of living", mentioned elements normally perceived as their components, such as "spectacular homes at affordable prices"; "relatively cheap accommodation costs (renting) in comparison to other European capitals (London, Paris, Madrid, even Warsaw)" and, more generally, indicating that "prices are relatively low (comparing to many other European capitals)". In the same vein, some respondents (four) appreciated the variety of cultural opportunities offered by the city ("lots of cultural events (cinema, concerts, etc.)"), despite a relatively non-metropolitan character ("all the life and culture of a capital yet pleasant to live as if in a much smaller city"; "Brussels - a big capital with a very local feel. Closeness of shops, cultural venues. One has everything needed, however, without the stress of a very big city"). Only three persons referred to the international importance of Brussels, calling it a "centre of Europe" or a "governing centre of Europe" or stressing that the "EU institutions are here". One of the male respondents pointed at the presence of a "strong Polish community" – again, it is quite characteristic that only one person referred to this factor which is often decisive in choosing destination by ordinary migrants.

On the other hand, the majority of the respondents (17 out of 30) complained about the quality of services in Belgium ("poor commercial services"; "low quality of many services, including customer service"; "poor level of services while they are pretty expensive"; "very expensive services for zero quality!"). As one of the women developed: "fairly low service provision culture – applying to the administration too. *E.g.,* needing to take a day off work in order to wait for an electrician or phone, gas company employee or a postman with a recommended parcel, *etc.*" Interestingly, more than a half of the respondents who praised the quality of life in Belgium also criticised the quality of services – apparently

this aspect of Belgian reality did not, in their view, significantly affect the quality of life.

Slightly less (15 persons) complained about the weather in Brussels (qualified with such adjectives as "unpredictable", "bad" or "depressive"). Another "objective" feature of Belgium which was often (7) quoted among its disadvantages was its distance from Poland ("it's 1.400 km from my home town and my family"; "far from home"; "distance to relatives in Poland"). Some respondents also mentioned "cultural distance". The others (although a clear minority) referred to the character of Belgian people as a significant nuisance. One of them mentioned "mentality of Belgians", someone else complained about "egoistic people". More specifically, two respondents criticised the Belgian sense of order ("visible differences to German *Ordnung*"; "poor organizational skills of Belgians"). Reference was also made to the ugliness of the capital city ("Brussels is dirty and ugly"; "Brussels is ugly + the Belgian countryside is spoilt"), political situation ("uncertain future status / resolved linguistic/cultural conflicts"; "completely incomprehensible political system. Governmental instability - possibility of Belgium divided in half"), perceived economic decline ("economic and political stagnation"; "limited professional perspectives"), and incompetent administration ("difficult relations with local administration and businesses"; "bad public administration – dangerous, not well organized (compared to Germany where I lived before)", "lengthy public administration"; "complex/non-user friendly administration – e.g., when needing to register, or pay taxes, or deal with the commune about anything else").

4.2.1.3. Criticism regarding the local "reality"

During my previous research (Rozanska 2009), I investigated the respondents' assessment of the local reality by the Polish EU officials. Most of them (27 out of 30) believed that the Polish EU community was critical towards the local reality. The explanations advanced were either dismissive of this critisism ("because Polish community is critical about anything"), or

full of understanding ("cause they are not stupid").

Some of my respondents suggested at that time that this critical attitude is due to "the inferiority complex", or that it is "a way of compensating complexes", other explained it by the lack of understanding of the local reality, as a result of the separation from the Belgian society and the encapsulation in the own Polish EU institutions' bubble. Finally, some respondents formulated a similar idea, suggesting that the critical attitude was related to the "difficulties to adapt to a new environment".

According to my respondents, the Polish EU civil servants complained about such phenomena as dirty streets, bad services, closing hours, food, weather and the state of public infrastructure. Their perception certainly corresponded with the opinions expressed directly by my respondents themselves. One of the respondents suggested that the criticism might be due to a "different historical background of the local society" while "free market and unrestrained civil freedoms are perhaps much more cherished in PL, as reintroducing them has been a historic effort".

Not all of the officials noticed this criticism. Some respondents expressed opposite views, stressing the difference between "opinions" and "criticism"; or claiming that "the cultural activities are appreciated ... : concerts, street festivals etc".

When I asked the same question during the present research to the new group, the results proved broadly concurrent. Out of 30 persons interrogated about whether their Polish fellows were critical towards the local reality, roughly two-thirds of all respondents considered that this was the case. Three groups can be distinguished among those who confirmed: those who shared this allegedly negative perception of Belgium and Belgians, those who criticised the negative attitude and those who simply reported the existence of the phenomenon, without giving their personal opinion. Some of the opinions belonging to the first group were indeed formulated as very sharp criticism ("this country doesn't function

properly, going to the doctor, dealing with administration, landlords is really complicated - people see it and hence the criticism"), some others disclosed the reason of the critical attitude of the other in a manner translating sympathy for these views ("because they had memories of the good, quality services, life and people from Poland and partially from US and UK"; "they are not happy with services in BE,[159] shops closing 10 minutes before they should, lack of flexibility of Belgian services providers, etc."). More respondents, however, reported the critical attitude of other Poles with some distaste and more or less explicit rejection of such an attitude: "Belgium bashing is a very popular activity among the foreigners, including Poles. Often it's exaggerated to absurd levels"; "I think we, Poles, generally like to complain and be critical. Even if objectively we don't have a good reason to do so". As one of the participants observed, "a lot of them ... complain a lot about Belgium and Belgians. Usually, however, they don't have closer relations with them besides the commercial or administrative ones." Someone else remarked: "I often hear that it is better in Poland, shops, cleanliness, etc., while I can clearly see it is just the opposite." Another respondent explained:

> They are often very quick to criticize everything from the start (comparing it unfavourably to what you can buy or what service quality you can get in Poland) without trying to understand the local reality at least partly. Also they tend to focus on some (critical/negative) aspects only while failing to notice areas where Poland is clearly lagging behind (e.g., the access to and the quality of health care). They are often objectively right, but it annoys me when people are in a very negative mindset from the moment of arriving in a country which they know very little about.

The quality of services was a recurring theme, almost all criticism-sympathetic and neutral respondents referred to the quality of services. In fact, this is the part of Belgium many of them know best, as this is, in some cases, the only moment where they interact with the locals. On the other hand, many criticism-critical persons suggested, implicitly, that the critical attitude might originate from complexes: "they are quite often acting as if they would

[159] Belgium.

be from NY[160] or other big city with the best weather and not e.g., from Radom or another village".

As to those who simply reported on the phenomenon without assessing it, the following opinions could be found: "many Polish people working for the EU do not like Brussels in general. They think it is filthy, the people are not sympathetic, the metro is dirty, that it is dangerous, that there are not enough places to go out, not enough cultural venues etc."; "people tend to complain all the time about the EC,[161] the weather, the country lacking a government, Belgians etc.". Another female respondent clearly pointed at the "security situation, [and again at the] level of services in Belgium".

Finally, the minority of respondents denied that the Poles are critical towards the local reality: "sometimes we exchange the similar stories about having had to wait for a gas company employee for a whole day or the inefficiency of the local commune, but I would not call it being critical".

4.2.2. Polish communities in Brussels: one or more?

The community of Polish EU officials in Brussels had its actual origins in the virtual space, notably, in an open access forum of *Gazeta Wyborcza* (this was shortly after passing the competition, when there were still not that many Poles in the EU institutions) and then, on a "closed" Google "EPS" list with access enabled only to Polish EU institutions employees (Rozanska 2009, 2011). The first of these networks, had made it possible to use pseudonyms (nick names). By contrast, in order to have access to the "EPS" list, Polish EU institutions'

[160] New York.
[161] European Commission.

employees, had to use their official, work email addresses. In that way, random "invaders" were excluded.[162]

As suggested by Blackshaw and Fielding-Lloyd, "the Internet does not provide a separate reality or necessarily detract from our social contact with others, but typically serves to *supplement existing* relationships" (2010:109). In case of the Polish EU community in Brussels, it also served as a starter, a catalyst. Different forms of socializing in virtual space were swiftly transposed in the real life, notably in the form of monthly meetings in one of the Irish pubs in the Schuman area, but also through some other forms of cultural and social activities, including those in smaller circles (see Rozanska 2009:163-169; 2011:293).

It must be noted that certain authors consider that there is one single Polish community[163] in Belgium (Paspalanova 2006; Kuźma 2010). The opposite view is represented, for example, by Lambrecht (2007). My initial assumption was that a single, integrated, homogenous community of Poles in Brussels did not exist. This conclusion was based on the existing literature on the Polish economic migrants (see e.g., Grzymała-Kazłowska 2005)[164] and on my previous research on the Polish EU officials (Rozanska 2009).

However, I wanted to confirm it and verify if this situation had not evolved over the years separating the two studies on the Polish EU institutions' community (or perhaps only the Polish EU officials, should the situation have changed).

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[162] This was particularly important in the light of the previous experiences of the group with the open mailing list that was "invaded" by often verbally aggressive compatriots, mainly the economic migrants from the Podlasie region) (see Rozanska 2009:147-155; 2011:290).

[163] I develop on the notion of community in section 2.1.

[164] As Grzymała-Kazłowska observes, still before Poland's accession to the EU, "the 'official' Polish community, predominantly made up of educated individuals performing prestigious jobs, distance[d] itself from newcomers undertaking illegal employment and performing unskilled labour" (2005:677). As she further argues, "documented Polish residents and Belgians of Polish origin are well integrated into Belgian society, although they sometimes maintain their Polish identity and form their own ethnic associations which are virtually closed to undocumented migrants" (ibid). She is even pointing at "the public hostility of the 'official' Polonia towards undocumented Polish workers" (ibid). Moreover, as Grzymała-Kazłowska suggests, there are strong divisions even amongst the Polish workers as regards their region of origins – in this case, amongst the Poles from Podlasie and Lubelszczyzna (2001b:54).

Indeed, it appears that there are still two or even more separate circles, which according to Jeremi are "totally different worlds". The first one – largely organised around the Polish church in Brussels - consists of labour workers (see e.g., Leman 1997, 2000; Siewiera 1995; Grzymała-Kazłowska 2001b, 2005). This "world" is very much present in the testimonies of my respondents, perceived as something completely different and strange, the otherness of which inspires the feeling of distinctiveness of the community of EU officials. As, indeed, my respondents usually saw themselves as a community apart.

Only one respondent, Zofia, believed that there was one Polish community in Belgium:

> I think there is a Polish community in Belgium. There is a Polish church. A lot of people go to the Polish church and across all kinds of categories and classes ... We have now two newspapers: *Gazetka* and *Nowinki,* I think it's the other one that is a bit more new and those also Polish people read … across categories. I was in April this year, … or in May at this "The Pole of the year" event. [This event has been organised] for six or seven years … There are five categories: social, business, art, young talent and I don't know what's the fifth one[165]… . So, it's a big event, indeed, at the Theatre St. Michel and it gathered plenty of Polish but also Belgian people. It was transmitted via TV Polonia and so I was there. And I think, there is really this kind of feeling of belonging, because there were also Polish people from outside of Brussels, like this very old emigration that came to work in the carbon mines … There was one man that even got this prize or a very young girl of 16 years old, who lives somewhere in Antwerp and she sings in Polish, Flemish, French, English. She sings in all the languages and she got the Young Talent Prize. So I think also with this kind of events it creates some kind of feeling that there is a Polish community; and I think it's a very strong community and ... very visible here; and now even in the local elections, we have Polish candidates. And I think it's a community that has quite a good image amongst Belgians, I think so. Comparing to, I don't know, Maghrebians or Africans, sometimes I think they still see us as really Europeans like the Italian community, or the Portuguese, Spanish that is very old here. The Polish one is also starting to be like that. (Zofia)

Others, with regret, observed that although there are a lot of Poles in Belgium, or specifically in Brussels, there is no organised and self-conscious community (e.g., Otylia, Beniamin). This, according to Otylia, contrasts with the situation of other nationalities that have strongly distinctive communities in Belgium. Also Ksawery pointed out:

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[165] The competition is organised by the Council of the Polish Community in Brussels with the collaboration of the *Section Consulaire de l'Ambassade de la République de Pologne au Royaume de Belgique* and the following organisations: Polish Emigration and Polish Expat Network (PEN). The prizes are awarded in the following categories: Culture; Business; Social Engagement; Le Prix de la Polonia; Le Prix des Internautes. http://www.polakroku.be/a-propos-du-concours/ , accessed November 12, 2015.

> There is a problem of lacking of cultural identification and this is also valid for the community of EU officials from Poland, but it's also a problem for the rest of the Polish migrants who came and work here in Belgium. (Ksawery)

As he added:

> And I think that the problem existed and exists, but probably with time and with different waves of migration and backgrounds of people who come and with more channels of communication and interaction with those groups, we perceive the Polish minority as a whole and as kind of homogenous community. (Ksawery)

He found it important to

> first of all recognize its existence and value, … [to] recognize that this community can bring a lot to Belgium and to Europe, and also that this community needs certain rights that should be respected by others and that kind of understanding is growing and this kind of interaction and different group of migrants help each other in recognizing this kind of need and necessity. (Ksawery)

Most of my respondents pointed at differences between different groups of Polish people in Brussels, suggesting the existence of two or more communities.

This distinction was referred to for instance by Dominika:

> I think there are two [communities] in fact. I think there is one and that's the people working in the EU institutions … and I think that the officials do not mix that easily with Poles who don't work in the EU institutions, so it's like two circles, I mean, all the Poles who are here for a very long period, I mean longer than those who came here with accession and onwards. It's a completely different milieu than the Poles who came here with the enlargement. (Dominika)

Some made a distinction between the inside and the outside of the Commission, and point to a strong inside Polish community with its own support system (mailing list). Some others, like Maksymilian, observed that there was a kind of a "mainstream community", although "not everybody is meant to be in it":

> I think there is a community of Polish EU officials and "expats" and maybe there are also other communities, I don't know. And definitely now all Polish EU officials or Polish "expats" belong to this community. But I have the impression there is a kind of a central [community], I mean, it is not that there are many small communities, which have nothing to do with each other, but there is some kind of mainstream community, but not everybody is meant to be in it - I'm not for example. (Maksymilian)

Patrycja, and Ula seemed to subscribe to the idea outlined by Maksymilian and claimed that, rather than speaking of larger communities, one can observe the existence of

small integrated communities inside the rather atomised group of Polish people living in Brussels:

> I wouldn't really call it a community, the third community is less strong, it's just the link of people working in the Commission and in the institutions, we're just connected with each other via a mailbox discussion group, but it's not that [strong]. At least I'm not that much involved, so I don't know these people personally, you just write on the group and you get the answer. But I think there is a group of people who meet quite regularly. There are some meetings, but I've never participated in that, so maybe that is another community that is stronger than I thought. (Patrycja)

> Inside the Commission we have this Polish group that keeps us informed. We ask questions and so on and we can always have an advice. Outside, [the EU Commission] I don't know how it looks like. I think they mostly live in families, together. (Ula)

However, some other interviewees referred to larger "communities", stressing the internal integration of these groups. For instance, some of them (like Zofia cited above) emphasized the advanced level of organisation of the Polish economic migrants' community, quoting the role of Polish newspapers (*Gazetka*[166] and *Nowinki*[167]) or cultural events such as for instance the "Pole of the year",[168] (or even Polish shops) as important tools of maintaining the Polish community.

> I think this is because there are some magazines or some events that I saw that they exist, I see them and okay, when I see such a magazine, I take it just to have a look what's happening or … what issues bother Polish people living here or what advise they can have to each other … yes, so I think there is [the Polish community]. I don't feel very strongly involved in it and I'm not following it very closely. (Emilia)

> I would say there are two Polish communities. Well, let's be frank. Both are well organised. Finally, *Gazetka,* etc., Polish shops – this is alive. The contest for "the Pole of the year". There is the Polish Community and there is also the community of "expats" from the institutions, sometimes strongly linked with the Permanent Representation which organises the events. (Filip)

Others emphasized the role of the Polish Embassy (this was especially important in the context of the old Polish immigration who had arrived long before the labour migrants wave) or of the Club of Polish Women in Brussels (*Brukselski Klub Polek* - BeKaP). Yet others pointed at the crucial role of the "EPS" mailing list and monthly meetings, but this in

[166] http://gazetka.be
[167] http://nowinki.be
[168] http://www.polakroku.be/a-propos-du-concours/.

the context of the community of Polish EU officials. The second group (EU officials together with other Polish "expats") were sometimes seen as "strongly linked with the Permanent Representation" (Filip).

Finally, it seems that a certain genuine feeling of distinctiveness, almost hostility towards members of other groups, was also an element contributing to the emergence of the communities:

> No [there is no homogenous Polish community in Brussels]. It depends on a person. Some maintain contacts only with the persons who are here on diplomatic positions, a kind of high-life, but I rather do not classify people this way. For me, a doctor is important, but the man who makes windows, for example, is equally important, if it is a person who is valuable as a human being. But there are persons who maintain [contact] only within their own group and these people do not necessarily interrelate, as this is the same problem that I had at the very beginning, that these people were simply from another planet and we had nothing in common with each other. And there were constant conflicts, as they appreciated me only if they could use my knowledge of French … [to] arrange something. And I helped them, for instance, to obtain a paper, to arrange for schools, etc. But once I was not useful anymore, [their] comments were so scandalous, you know ... That is why I say that these people were scum. And such people are still here and you can't do anything about it. So, there is no such a thing as one community. Even if there are some big, common events, the people who come do not maintain daily contact with each other. (Laura)

Concerning the typology of such different communities, Kamil distinguished four different categories of Poles, including, next to the two most common ones, the old *Polonia* and a separate category of students and "expats" who, according to him "tend to mix rather with EU officials than others." As Kamil recounts:

> No. I think there are three distinct communities or even four, and they do not have necessarily a lot in common and at least, and for sure they do not share the common institutions and common objectives and ideas. So there is the first one which is maybe now not very large, but it used to be important – the old *Polonia* let's say, with their own … long established institutions. Then you have the fresh wave of the nineties and this decade workers to work in the cheap labour market here and they don't have any institutions basically, besides shops and bars and the church. And then you have the officials - in the Commission and the Parliament and staff like that. They have their own kind of institutional ways of socializing including a mailing list and those meetings, plus of course, they share the same institutions and then you have other people: "expats" and students for example, which do not belong to neither of these categories and they are kind of apart, but I think that "expats" and students tend to mix rather with EU officials than others. (Kamil)

Darek attempted some typology of the Poles in Brussels, adding short characteristics:

> I think that the Poles are well divided … You have all this crowd of Poles from Siemiatycze – this is a very big group – then, I don't know, how it is ... Certainly it is sub-divided in the way that you have, let's assume, ordinary workers and the entrepreneurs who live somewhere in

> Kraainem and they have villas – not that all Eurocrats envy these workers, that despite one is a worker, he has a villa which is three times bigger than your small flat and some huge car, while you cannot afford a small flat out of your work. Then, there is this crowd working in the construction sector, and then, there are the Eurocrats. Here, there are two major groups: people working in the European Parliament and their assistants. They all keep together and this is the first integrated group, which is also subdivided somehow, but rather not along the party lines. There are a few political groups, each integrated inside, but they still have contacts. Then, there are ordinary Euro-officials, and this is quite a big group, where there are *coteries*. A big group consisting of *coteries*, in average 10-15 persons having closer contacts with each other. Then, there are people employed at the Council and I do not know much about them. They are on the side, somehow. They never show up. I have the impression that these are older persons with families and they do not have time for such social gatherings. Then, there are the Poles from the Representation, from the Embassy - this is yet another group. And there are the people from the Representations, from the regions, as well as those working in private firms who are not necessarily from Siemiatycze, but from the whole Poland. (Darek)

Bernard emphasized that belonging to one or another community did not really depend on specific features of Polish persons in Brussels, but mostly on one's choice (this latter idea was supported also by Otylia and, in a way also, by Laura):

> I think it's impossible to say that there is one [community] and everybody is included. I think that Eurocrats, old Eurocrats [first wave] do hang out together. Some of them at least. And you can call it a community, I think. And I don't think that anybody is excluded. It just depends on you whether you want to join or not. I think it's a decision. (Bernard)

> No, there are a lot of Polish people, but there is no Polish community, in my opinion. If there is, these are very small groups which I have never tried to reach, as I have never had such a need. But this is not a strongly integrated community. Other nationalities have strongly distinctive communities, and the Poles do not have it really. (Otylia)

As my respondents presented it, the different communities were, nevertheless in contact. Provision of services is regarded as a space where the two main Polish communities meet. Polish EU officials are often clients of Polish servicemen and Polish shops belonging to the group of economic migrants:

> A uniform Polish community? No, I would say there isn't, as, unfortunately, despite the effort, there are a lot of various institutions in Brussels by now, which promote the Polish people here in Belgium. There is the Club of Polish women [BeKaP], there are many, many institutions. However, I think this is still a group which is divided into the groups of the Eurocrats and the remaining emigrants. These two worlds, except where they meet at the occasion of the provision of services, are two separate worlds. (Klara)

Based on these accounts, it is quite obvious that, in the perception of the Polish EU officials, there is no such thing as "the Polish community in Brussels". My interlocutors seem to understand the notion of "community" as referring to the interactions within the group, but

also the feeling of belonging. While looking at definitions of Rapport and Overing (2005:61), emphasizing such factor as "common interests" or "a common social system or structure", it seems that, indeed, the authors would agree with my interviewees. There is certainly no awareness of "common interests" between the EU officials and economic migrants from Podlasie, their contacts are too superficial and unstructured to perceive them as any functioning entity (Rapport and Overing 2005:61).

Independently of the actual attitude of my interviewees towards economic migrants and service providers from Podlasie, except for isolated cases, Polish EU officials do not maintain intensive contacts with other Poles in the city. Certainly, they sometimes buy their services (not all of them, not always and not every type of services, as my research further shows), but they socialise among themselves or with other highly skilled movers, sometimes including students. They do not seem to form one group with the "old immigration" of Poles either. Such a community seems to be limited to the Polish EU officials, kept together notably thanks to the "EPS" list, even if the ties are not equally tight throughout the group: the EU officials interviewed mentioned different sub-groups, *coteries*, or the core group of "old" Polish officials, not covering all members of the Community. Each of the segments of Polish population in Brussels present a certain level of organisation, with the aforementioned "EPS" list for the Eurocrats and the Polish dailies for the Podlasie community.

If today, there is no single Polish community in Brussels, is it likely to change? Is there any reason to believe that the Polish officials are likely to choose the path of "segmented integration" (Bosswick and Heckmann 2006) within the overall Polish population in Brussels? In order to further investigate the mutual relations of the distinct communities the existence of which was confirmed by the answers to the previous questions, I asked my respondents about the attitudes of the EU officials towards other Polish communities.

Some of the interviewees described, as requested in the question, the attitudes of other EU officials towards other Poles in Brussels, while others focused on their own perception. In both cases, they were expressing personal opinions on the "other Poles", although the sincerity of these affirmations is uncertain. Only a few persons insisted on negative features of this community or declared that they kept distance from them. Most of the group either directly or indirectly (through criticism of the opposite stand) declared their positive attitude.

According to one of my interviewees, the EU officials hardly know any working class Poles in Brussels. However, asked about their contacts with lawyers employed in Brussels law firms or other highly skilled Polish professionals, he confirmed:

> Oh, the "halo"? No, those, they know ... I mean, at this level, where people have, let's say, professions requiring higher education and high educational qualifications (but I'm not saying that the workers do not need to have high qualifications), these professions, [with them] the contacts are good. And with people working in the construction sector, in care services, there are nearly no contacts. This has not changed, in my opinion, for the last five years. Five years ago, similarly, you knew people from the regions, from lobbying, or else and those who did physical work or *au pair* – less. (Filip)

Some respondents stigmatised the allegedly patronising and elitist attitude of their fellow EU officials. Maja, for instance, said cautiously:

> A few times, I happened to notice some kind of *mépris* … Like the lack of respect for such more modest persons, not educated perhaps, who work in cleaning, they said that these people should not be paid as much as ten Euro, because they will get used to it and they will ask for so much. But this concerned perhaps two persons only, but besides, I don't know, I can't say. (Maja)

Stanislaw confronted the negative attitude of many Polish EU officials with his own, positive one:

> Well, I think that it's a natural coexistence. You know, I can say for myself and I can say for some people. But of course there are a lot of "expats" who are from the same villages and they feel much better than the compatriots who are cleaning houses or repairing roof. It's not my style. I'm patriotic in this sense, that I have all my servicemen Polish. Cleaning lady, dentist, mechanic, doctor, hairdresser, security, insurance guy, everything.
> How I see my role? I'm earning quite good money. I want to improve Polish economy by spending my money in Poland. Spending my money in Poland means to buy goods in Poland and giving this money to these "Siemiatycze guys" (and they will bring it to Poland). (Stanislaw)

Kamil made similar observations:

> About students, I don't think there are any particular emotions, but regarding those people who came here before and who come normally from a kind of a very targeted region in Poland, so distinct at least in the language, let's say, if you consider this like that, then I think I've observed some kind of "feeling of superiority" or even arrogance of some people towards them and this is reflected also in the social divisions, as these groups do not normally mix up. Besides, maybe some big events like WOŚP [The Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity][169] or whatever. But I must say, … I know personally in my kind of close circle of friends, or acquaintances … at least two couples which are mixed - I mean EU officials and this construction worker for example, so personally, I don't have any problems with that, but I've heard sometimes people saying that. (Kamil)

None of these testimonies contained ascription of the feeling of superiority to all EU officials, my interlocutors usually made clear that these are only their impressions, based on limited experience.

Laura went even further in expressing her solidarity and chastising some disdainful attitude of young Polish EU officials:

> Frankly, we don't speak about it much, but I don't think that the Poles, at least those with whom I am in contact (as I do not know what is the attitude of these young, conceited persons …), they have a very positive attitude towards these people, they think of them similarly to how I do. Well, these are persons like us, who probably have not made studies, perhaps are not so ambitious, but probably it is much harder for them than for us, as the kids here are "snug like a bug in a rug", and these people deserve respect, as it is much harder for them in the Belgian environment, for instance. I often draw people's attention to the fact that they are having everything handed on a plate while those who are on the local labour market are terribly discriminated and it is much harder for them and I am very much in favour of the Polish private initiative, people founding undertakings and doing pretty well, which is very difficult, even for Belgians, while for the foreigners this is terribly difficult. And yet they are managing with it, they build houses and their children do well at school. I think that at least the people with whom I am in contact have very good attitude to them, for instance this week I discovered a new shop with chocolate where a Polish woman works, and immediately after the Poles [officials] come back from holidays, I'll put it on the [mailing] list, we also simply promote a bit Polish initiatives outside the institutions, Polish shops, some Polish cultural institutions no matter how they are, some Polish contacts, we are not some kind of sick patriots, but we try to strengthen the Polish *diaspora*, to the extent that we even advertise local elections and I, for instance, dispatch information concerning people who are candidates in local elections, where I don't live, for example, I don't live in Etterbeek, so can't be candidate, but I dispatch to my friends who are not on the list, so that they know. It is worth asking someone who really wants to do something interesting, thanks to which also the Polish diaspora will have a completely different image in their eyes and they will take us seriously, perhaps people will be less discriminated because of this, etc., so I think that we have a positive attitude to these people. (Laura)

The opinion of Dominika was quite similar:

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[169] The Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity (GOCC) Foundation is Polish non-governmental, non profit organization (for more information: http://www.wosp.org.pl).

> I'm not very proud to say that, but I think that officials feel much more valuable and well better in short, than most of other Poles living here. Especially of course the construction workers and cleaning ladies. I deeply believe it's not a different category of people, they are same Poles, they come from different regions as well, and they just had maybe less chance or they made different choices in their lives. (Dominika)

Another group of respondents focused on the fact that the relations between the two communities are mainly based on and modelled by commercial exchange. Their opinions were free from a somewhat moralising tone of the previously quoted accounts. This is how Aleksandra described it:

> I don't know. Here I can, I suppose, speak on the basis of my personal experience. I think the contacts are very often service providers contacts. And I have used services of Polish building team or cleaning ladies and I suppose the nationality plays a role, the quality of the work played a role. So, I don't know if it's evolved, but for me the ones that I have known of – they are very positive and I've been recommending those people further to other friends. (Aleksandra)

The testimony of Klara is somewhat similar:

> [The attitude of the Polish EU civil servants towards the other categories of Polish migrants in Brussels is] [v]ery diverse ... I mean the truth is that the contact that the Polish Eurocrats have with other Polish migrants is a contact through services provided by cleaning ladies or various specialists ... well, construction men, let's call them like that. So I think these are service relations, the Eurocrats are receivers and the other emigrants provide them, and this is actually the only existing contact, I think so, although I had friendly relations with my cleaning lady who has now left for Poland, but we have children in a similar age and we simply met for coffee every Saturday, it was very nice. So, I think this is an individual question, whether to transgress the borders of simply providing and receiving services. (Klara)

Interestingly, the relations between the Polish Eurocrats and the Polish non-EU population is pictured in terms which could very well be applied to relations between the "Polish workers" with the non-Polish "expats", as well as with the autochthones.

In the same time, both interviewees quoted above also signalled their positive and open attitude to the fellow non-EU employed community. This is also the case of Emilia, who explained how nationality influenced these commercial relations:

> It's hard for me to say whether it has changed or not. I think the attitude is … that it's good to have this possibility to work with some of them, like to employ them for some work, mainly domestic work. Yeah, I think that the positive thing is that you feel that you give work to a Polish person, and also you can communicate easily, or you share sometimes some similarities, so I think the attitude is positive. I can't say, I don't have any experience that it could be the other way. (Emilia)

Zofia responded in a similar manner, although she emphasized that her response concerned the "economic migrants" only, and not the other groups, such as earlier waves of immigration:

> Well, I don't know, there are many of those who arrived after the war, who have lived here for a long time or in the 1980s because of *Solidarność*, and I think that a lot of people have a Polish cleaning lady, would they be the Polish officials or other officials, that's very typical. And sometimes you would even say you're from Poland, and they immediately say, "oh, I have a Polish cleaning lady", … or, I have got a Polish, you know, construction works company for the renovation of the house. So, that are two typical situations.
> I would say I have contacts with them. When we did some works at home, I took a Polish company and I was very satisfied with [their work]. I don't have a cleaning lady at all, but maybe I will take a Polish one, I don't know, I don't care too much. I sometimes go to a Polish shop, where I meet, you know, some people from a bit everywhere, and it's just normal. I think most of the contacts we have are for services ... It's like an exchange of services. Some people go to a Polish hairdresser or even when they are looking for a tailor, they would look for a Polish lady, you know, because they are the best, or whatever, I don't know. So I think it's mainly [around the] services ... And then we have this one exception that is this lady who has a library - that through the services, she became a friend I must say so, and her whole family here. (Zofia)

References to "provider - customer" relations could be found also in other opinions, going beyond this relationship though. Sebastian presented a rather positive picture of relations between the two communities, referring even to cases of "mixed" friendships:

> There are two groups of Poles living in Belgium, right? One group is the employees of EU institutions and another group: there are simple workers, so there are not that many Poles who are somewhere in the middle. There are some, right? In the bank next to the Schuman, there is a Polish lady … but, the majority of Poles are simple workers. I don't have really any observations. I don't think that they are really that patronized that one could be afraid of. I did not really observe any such a horrible patronizing instinct or behaviours. I have at least one friend ..., an acquaintance who is on this other side - a girl dancing tango whom I meet quite regularly - a Polish girl who is not employed by the EU institutions, which means that she is just a cleaning lady. Obviously, she has a problem with this. (Sebastian)

Also Beniamin presumed that the relations between the two communities are good, although he admitted that he was not really aware of the attitude of the Polish EU officials to their compatriots in Brussels:

> Frankly speaking, I have no idea. I mean, I don't really know what's the attitude of other Polish people or other Polish Eurocrats towards people working in the construction or in another work. I think it's okay. I mean I haven't heard or noticed anything strange in these relations and I think that Polish workers are generally respected in Belgium because of the quality of their work, so I think the attitude, if there is any attitude, it's rather positive than negative, but it is difficult for me to say. (Beniamin)

Yet it should be observed that not only those interviewees who presented their attitude to fellow Poles in the cleaning and construction sector as positive, but sometimes also those who, like Sebastian, explicitly claimed that this attitude is generalised among the Polish Eurocrats, referred to "patronising" or "a sense of superiority" as attitudes which could be expected in this situation.

Finally, some EU officials indeed expressed rather negative views on their compatriots from the cleaning and construction sector living in Brussels. For instance, Patrycja said:

> The only thing that I know from people that I speak to is that many of us are ashamed about the Polish community here, Polish working class I would call them: *dames de titres services* and the others, because honestly, they are the only people we see on the streets that are drunk. I've never seen anybody else who was rude and aggressive and drunk, who was not Polish, so somehow this makes me feel ashamed. But on the other hand, I think we feel proud about positive opinions, because we also know from other foreigners with whom we work that they have the best *femme de ménage*, and she is Polish, or the best nanny and she is Polish, or the best plumber or electrician who fix their house … On the other hand, we have a good opinion as hardworking people, but there is a very big part of Polish people who are destroying this good opinion because of alcohol. (Patrycja)

Maksymilian distanced himself from other EU officials as a community, while his opinion on other Poles living in Brussels was mixed: he appreciated contacts with the more educated part of the community, while he admitted he avoided any contact with the cleaning/construction sector people, referred to as "migrants from Podlasie":

> To be honest, I have no clue, because … I am not making an effort, let's say, to participate in the life of the Polish community in Brussels, so I don't know whether they, as a community, [whether] they like or dislike the economic migrants from Podlasie. Personally, I don't have anything against my fellow Polish EU officials, but I'm not seeking to spend time with them. By contrast, when I see someone from the group of the economic migrants from Podlasie, normally I try to avoid contacts with them because I think that they have a very different background … I mean, they are very different from me. I mean, probably they are more different from me than an average "expat" and I think it would be quite unpleasant to have to talk to them and spend time with them. So, personally I have nothing against these people, as long as they are far away from me. There are also other groups of Poles in Belgium and I think this is my favourite category of Poles in Brussels, because they are educated people, "expats", who on one hand are not EU officials, so we don't talk about the Commission life, and, they have different experiences. They are different and that's what is appealing. And at the same time, they are people like me, they are culturally, and mentally more or less close to me. And I also think that other EU officials tend to have the same attitude towards them, because, well sometimes I go to these gatherings of the Polish community (although I didn't like it but I went there a couple of times) and there are always plenty of other Poles from

> regional representations, lawyers, people working in NGOs or private firms, this kind of things, this kind of people. (Maksymilian)

Interrogated on whether he would use services provided by these other Poles as a customer, he replied:

> Well, I think I might use services of the construction people or mechanics in certain situations if they were really cheaper, but not because they are Poles. It's just that if they are cheaper, and if I was convinced that they are sufficiently professional, I would probably have nothing against using their services. Baby-sitting, I don't think so, because, I would be afraid to leave my cat with one of these people so I don't think that, once I have a baby (today I don't have children), … that I would leave my child with the kind of Polish people, who usually are baby-sitters. That would have to be someone I really know, or someone recommended, but really someone who is intelligent enough and educated enough to have sufficient imagination not to kill or seriously damage health of my child. (Maksymilian)

If Patrycja raised the problem of alcohol abuse, Darek focused on the security issue:

> Well, these persons, one can be afraid of them, as they are of poor upbringing, they are very loud, often in a vulgar manner ... I often have the impression that I am seeing some lads, criminals, half-criminals, they walk loudly, often with a bottle or with a can of beer in hand, also girls. They usually stroll in couples or groups and they behave like Muslims, Arabs, they stroll in gangs, you don't even know what it is about, they behave loudly and they are vulgar. I think this is not because they don't know that I am Polish and I can hear what they are saying, because they would swear the same if they knew that it's a Pole passing by, I mean, these are the persons that you see on the street and that when you see them on the street, effectively discourage you from trying to meet other, "good" persons who certainly are in this group. (Darek)

Like Maksymilian, Darek also appreciated a part of Polish community in Brussels, although this group seems much more exclusive:

> Concerning the persons occupying high positions in private companies or in the administration, I do not know a lot of such persons. I mean, I know, I knew a few persons, as some of them left, a few persons working in banks. I'm trying to avoid contacts with persons from the Permanent Representation, although I do not know whether that's who you're asking about, because these are not EU officials, but these are like the same persons, but from the other side. We are dealing with the same matter, but they are on the other side and I often need to attack them on the professional ground, thus I think it is not desirable that I have any social relations with them. (Darek)

Some respondents also shared their impressions on the evolution of the relations between the communities over time. For instance, Adrian considered that a sometimes-disapproving attitude of the Polish EU officials to these less privileged Polish migrants has remained constant:

> On one hand, it is indifferent, sometimes very positive, but it happens to be, unfortunately, contemptuous. It depends on the person, especially that there is this large group from

> Siemiatycze which is perceived, by some people, stereotypically and with a grain of salt. Perhaps this is not hostility, but sometimes there are such strange smiles and I do not think that it has changed over years. These are, more or less, constant ... Perhaps it is not much debated, but these were lasting, durable ... either indifference, or, unfortunately, prejudice. (Adrian)

Similarly, Jeremi did not notice any difference ("it's still the same as it was three or four or five years before") although his view of the mutual relations between these groups had a rather negative character. As he elaborated:

> I think that Polish officials in the European institutions, they live in a kind of, I would say, ah, "a ghetto". It is not a good word, but they live in their own world and … they don't need to look outside …, to have contacts with the outside world. Of course it depends on the person, because sometimes, well from my personal observations, my colleagues, they know that of course there is a lot of our compatriots living in Brussels and working outside the institutions, but they don't need to have contacts with them, they don't want to, but of course they know that there are Polish nannies, Polish [street/domestic workers], etc., but I know that some people, they think that's okay, I work for the European institution, so I'm someone better than my compatriots who clean houses. I think that that was the case a few years ago and it's still the case nowadays. (Jeremi)

When asked about the attitude towards some other highly skilled Polish people, he replied, "they are still divided".

Ksawery was one of the few officials who saw an improvement in the mutual relations of both Polish communities in Brussels:

> There were waves of migration. First of all, there was an old wave of migration already from the 19th Century and those families live not only in Brussels but also in other cities; and then there was another couple of waves of migration in the 1970s and 1980s and 1990s. First of all, I don't think that this is an issue for the Poles who work for the European institutions. There is, I think, a very good cooperation between those groups and we learnt a lot probably over those years, here in Brussels how we can strengthen our powers and position by strictly collaborating on what we are doing best. And I think that, that is also my personal feeling and experience, that knowing each other better, we really understand better what are our expectations and what are our values, and then we can possibly also valuate those minority groups in the eyes of other nationals and other citizens of Belgium or other nationalities who live in Brussels. So, I think that this kind of interaction is improving and getting better and benefiting both sides more and more. (Ksawery)

The picture of relations between the Polish EU officials and other Polish groups in Brussels is quite mixed. On one hand, a number of persons appreciated the Polish expat community. The principle of homophily (McPherson et al. 2001) seems to apply fully in their case, as the same interviewees seemed reluctant towards the idea of maintaining close relations with the economic migrants from Siemiatycze. On the other hand, most of my

interviewees focus on the relations with this latter category. Some interviewees apparently approach them with caution and seemed to be repulsed by their presumed difference, lack of education, inclination to heavy drinking or even violence. Some other speak about them positively and do not see any negative attitude from the side of other EU officials. They describe their relations in neutral terms, often focusing on the provision of goods and services as the main axis of contacts. Finally, some of my respondents denounce the presumed contempt and patronising from the side of the Eurocrats' community. However, they typically remained silent on their own relations with the Siemiatycze people (except for Zofia, Klara and Kamil). Thus, it is difficult to say, on the basis of responses to this question, if their openness and respect materialise in the form of friendships or acquaintances in this milieu. However, if we combine their answers with the responses to the question on the existence of a single Polish community in Brussels, it can be presumed that such contacts are rare.

In order to obtain a broader picture and be able to compare between the attitudes of the Polish EU officials towards different communities, I asked my respondents (30) during my previous research (Rozanska 2009), whether they considered the Polish EU community as open towards various other communities living in Brussels, notably the Belgians, the community of Polish people not employed in the EU institutions, the ethnic minorities (such as the Moroccan, Turkish or Congolese people) and towards the other "expats". The same question was posed to the respondents from the new group. Responses were broadly similar in both groups: most of my respondents considered that Polish EU community was open for other foreigners ("expats") living in Belgium (27 affirmative indications out of 30 in the "old" group, 24 out of 26 in the "new group), respectively, 18 persons out of 30 and 14 out of 26 found them open to Belgians while only the half of the group or less (in the "new group") believed that the Polish community of EU officials was open to Poles not working in the institutions. The number of persons believing that the Polish EU officials are open to other

minorities in Brussels was particularly low (14 out of 30 in the "old group"; only 8 out of 26 in the "new group").

4.2.3. Conclusions on "the host environment"

This part of my research explores the perceptions of Brussels and its inhabitants by my research participants. In addition to the contribution to the analysis based on the complexity approach to integration (Eriksen 2007), this part of the study provides an opportunity to verify previous findings concerning Brussels. Moreover, it allows me to conclude whether Polish EU officials should be analysed as a part of a larger Polish "community". The relations with compatriots living in Brussels also shed some light on the role of ethnic bonds in the positioning of Polish EU officials towards the local population. Finally, their declared attitude to the local space and the people reveals interesting boundary-making patterns which can be compared with and interpreted in light of the previous research on boundaries in the expatriate world (see e.g., Fechter 2007a, 2007b).

The research results show that the perception of Brussels by the participants before the arrival was varied and often reflected the stereotyped imaginaries referred to by Calay and Magosse (2008). An important number of Polish EU officials changed their perception of Brussels after they settled in the city. Those who did not know the city and associated it mostly with its role as the capital of Europe sometimes expected to find more splendour. This recalls the opinions according to which Brussels was a "metonymy for the European Union" (Bellier 2002) or was even identified with Europe (Favell 2008a). Moreover, Brussels could be perceived through the prism of imaginaries of the wealthy and ordered West – still popular in Poland after the period of the communist dictatorship and deprivation and after the subsequent decade of notorious backwardness. This idealistic perception could not survive the confrontation with the ordinary, everyday hassle of living in the city. On the other hand,

those who had previously lived in other European countries compared Brussels with their previous place of living and this comparison was often unfavourable for Brussels, at least in certain aspects.

Meanwhile, some of those who had previously lived in Brussels for a short period of time and had experienced the negative side of living in the city but had no time to get used to these aspects could improve their initially negative perception after their permanent settlement.

Some research participants expressed positive views about the local population, the quality of life and, – very often – the available leisure opportunities, often related to the city's geographical situation. The "cosmopolitan" character of the city was often referred to, usually with a positive connotation. The negative comments concerning Brussels very often referred to the low quality of services and sometimes also to the poor functioning of the administration. Criticism was often very harsh.

This phenomenon could also be observed during my participant observation in the "Wild Geese" meetings, as well as at other informal gatherings I attended. Discussions about Belgium and Brussels, often taking the form of "Belgium-bashing" is one of the most common subjects of conversation among Polish EU officials (but also other expats) – it is a variation of "weather talk", together with recommending restaurants or exchanges on holidays plans and experiences, and institutions related news (and gossips). Here comes a typical sample of such conversations, originating from my field notes (June 2011):

> In the metro I told him [about a problem with my leg due to a medical error] … He immediately took up the subject and started complaining about medical services here. He said that [during a kneel surgery] Belgian doctors reduced 80% of his meniscus, while doctors in Poland said it was unnecessary, as only 20% should have been "cut off". He said he had heard many other similar stories. Then he switched to complaining about the life in Belgium in general. He compared Belgium to the Third World, he said there was no progress here and everything was just on its way to collapse. He pointed at the dirt in the metro and in the City 2 shopping mall to which he was just going … [At the shop] he started a long monologue [concerning a slow shop assistant], he said we had been waiting long enough and that he knew that in this country everybody had a lot of time … He added that after six years in Belgium he hadn't got used to it.

The most striking element in these opinions is a mismatch between the actual reason for complaints (as it was presented) and their intensity. Some of my respondents stressed that their fellow Polish EU officials do not actually come from a place where the situation would be radically better to what they encountered in Belgium. If this is indeed the case, the question is why the criticism was so vehemently expressed. The inferiority complex suggested by some of my respondents is one possible explanation: as mentioned elsewhere, Poles employed in the institutions may indeed suffer from well-rooted stereotypes about Poland and Eastern Europeans. According to these stereotypes, Poland is a poor backward country with low living standards and the Polish EU officials might feel frustrated that the changes which have occurred in their home country during the last 20 years have not been sufficiently noticed and recognised. This is super-imposed on Poland's long-standing "inferiority complex towards the West", referred to in particular by Sztompka (2004) and Janion (2007). This perceived lack of appreciation might trigger strong, sometimes excessive, criticism of the Belgian living standards in an attempt to rebut the anticipated contempt which Belgians would have towards their Polish or Eastern-European background. However, there might also be another explanation. Favell et al. argue that wealthy expatriates are often subject to discrimination by the host society (2007:21). This is undoubtedly true in the case of Polish EU officials in Brussels, who may suffer both as Eurocrats and as Eastern Europeans. In this situation, a natural reaction is to consolidate one's own community and strengthen ties with other groups of privileged migrants. According to Fechter, expatriates often create boundaries separating them from local populations (2007b:26; on boundaries manipulation in the context of minorities see also Leman 1998) in order to preserve their privileged status (Cohen 1977:24). Indeed, ritual rejection of the local reality through violent criticism of the local ways might play a role in cementing the community by strengthening the boundary separating it from the host society and confirming its belonging to the cast of EU officials or,

more generally, even the international elites inhabiting the city. If, in the case of less developed, post-colonial countries, such rejection is more natural and implicit (justified by the discrepancy between Western and local standards of living and important cultural differences), in the case of Belgium it might even appear counter-intuitive and hence needs to be constantly and explicitly verbalised. In this model, harsh, almost obsessive criticism of Belgian services, Belgian administration, and even Belgian weather assumes the role of being a verbal boundary marker (see Nash 1989:12) or, more generally, of being "signals and emblems of differences" (Barth 1998 [1969]:14).

In addition to Belgians and other (usually marginal in my research participants' accounts) population groups, Brussels is inhabited by a significant number of Polish migrants. Generally, the picture of relations with this population drawn by my respondents is rather complex. The Polish EU officials perceive themselves as distinct from other groups of Polish people in Brussels and certainly do not have the impression of belonging to a "Polish Community in Brussels". Some of them believe that there is such a thing as the community of Polish EU officials or – sometimes – "expats" in Brussels, but this feeling is not general. Some of the research participants believed instead that there are several communities of Polish EU officials, created on a voluntary basis.

The declared attitude of my respondents to other Poles was usually positive, but many of them considered that other Polish EU officials treat their compatriots with contempt. Interestingly, although the question did not explicitly refer to the economic migrants from Podlasie, this seemed to be the intuitive understanding of my research participants. One might wonder whether their assertions on their sympathy and respect were not somewhat hypocricious, given that other questions revealed that my research participants had only rare and superficial contact with their compatriots from the abovementioned category. Those who, indeed, expressed negative views, emphasized either drinking habits or security issues or

simply objective differences which made them estranged from the economic migrants from Podlasie. Less than half of my respondents considered their community open to other Poles, which is less than to other "expats" or even to Belgians not belonging to a minority.

At the margins, it is worth mentioning that, although the relations between the Polish EU officials and other high skilled migrants from Poland are visibly very different from those described above, I have also come across Polish non-EU institutions expats who complained about the seclusiveness and impenetrability of the Polish "Eurocrats". The experience of these people often resembled my own: some of our interlocutors lost interest tended to terminate the conversation once it was revealed that we did not work in the institutions. The exchange of information on DGs and units where new acquaintances worked is usually one of the first stages of any initial conversation, as if it was designed on purpose (although it was probably not) to identify people "from outside", aliens.

Already at this stage it seems possible to understand whether we may, at all, refer to "the Polish Community in Brussels". Such a creation clearly does not exist, no matter which of the definitions of a community referred to in Chapter 1 one adopts. There seems to be no common interest between different groups of Poles in Brussels (Overing and Rapport 2005) and no sense of belonging (Banks 1996; A.P. Cohen 1985; Jenkins 2002). There are no boundaries that my interviewees would be keen on establishing which would include the economic migrants from Podlasie (Barth 1998; Amit 2002a). Also, if one looks at a community in more dynamic terms (Warner 1941) as a functioning whole, it should be stressed that the actual relations between my interviewees and the Polish economic migrants appear to be sporadic.

One might refer to the situational approach to ethnicity (see e.g., Brettell 2003, 2008; Castles and Miller 2003; Jenkins 2008a; Eriksen 2015) and observe that, in the case of Polish EU officials, ethnicity (although important in absolute terms) is not the most important

element defining their position in Brussels. It is difficult to perceive any strong "we consciousness" (Leman 2000) based on ethnic criteria. They draw more power and privilege from their class and professional belonging to the "people of the House" (as referred to by Shore (2000:164)) than from the fact of being Polish. Even if their Polishness is an important element for their feeling of Europeanness (*infra*), their professional identity is sufficient to confirm their Europeanness, hence they have no interest in emphasizing their Polish distinctiveness, especially in light of the stereotypes about Eastern Europeans which still exist in Belgium. Therefore, it is logical that ethnicity is not used to construct boundaries by my researched group and hence there is no consciousness of belonging to the same community as other Poles in Brussels.

Here it might be useful to recall my previous research (Rozanska 2009) where I described the intensive socialising of Polish EU officials during the first years after their arrival in Brussels. In that context, invoking their Polishness was useful, as it allowed them to quickly create ties with other Polish officials in the same situation. The remnants of this phenomenon survive in the form of the mailing list of the Polish EU officials. Reference to their common origin with Polish economic migrants in Brussels is not beneficial and thus, if it is not dissimulated, is not particularly relied upon. This seems to confirm the situational approach to ethnicity (Bretell 2008) and, in particular, the opinion of Roosens (1989) on the situational character of the ethnicity of migrants.

4.3. Integration from the EU officials' perspective

In this section I will focus on the perception of integration by the research participants themselves. This includes important precision on their understanding of such terms as "adaptation" and "integration", but most importantly, the description by the Polish EU

officials of their relations with the host society, other communities inhabiting Brussels, the space they live in and their attitude to it.

4.3.1. Adaptation and integration in Brussels

The purpose of this part of the research was to find out how the Polish EU officials function in Brussels, what their strategies, preferences and attitudes are with regard to the process of integration into the host country.

General patterns of adaptation in a new society characteristic to ordinary migrants are different than in case of privileged migrants, such as the EU officials in Brussels. As Favell observes (2003b; 2008a) the privileged migrants do not aspire to assimilate into the local society, they rather "integrate" to the international community so visible in the city of Brussels. Favell observes that, although it is commonly admitted, in the European nation-state context, that integration implies naturalisation and thus immigrants are subject to pressures to this effect, this cannot apply to EU movers in Brussels, as the latter did not come to "go native", but to find "a denationalized freedom, a life beyond such norms" (Favell 2008a:136-7). Indeed, they are less often subject to the pressure by the host society to integrate. They receive support from their fellow EU officials and thus are less prone to join "ethnic" communities of their fellow nationals.[170]

A number of questions concerned the level to which they interact with the local society and other expats (including other Poles) and the nature of this interaction. These objectives are partly inspired by the theories of social and cultural integration, defined by Jeannette J. Schoorl and referring to, respectively, "the degree of interaction between

[170] In case of the first wave of the Polish EU officials, directly after the enlargement, their situation was quite atypical, as they tended to perceive the EU institutions (and their employees) as a distant fortress that they had been storming for so long, looking somewhat suspiciously at the newcomers from the other side of the Iron Curtain. On the other hand, the existing Polish community could not fulfill its supporting function, given the difference of class, economic status situation and even culture between the EU officials and the transmigrant community of Poles from Podlasie. However, this situation was exceptional and characterized only the very first years after the enlargement.

immigrant and native population groups" and "the degree to which various population groups share the same norms, values and preferences" (2005:2).

The questions, formulated in an open manner, concerned, *inter alia*, adaptation, integration and the understanding of these terms by my research participants. They are conceived to help me understand the focuses, the ways of thinking and categorising that my respondents propose themselves. For this reason, I abstained from excessive framing of the way they were supposed to answer the questions. More specifically, their purpose was to trigger testimonies translating the perception and also some categories of mind of my interviewees related to the functioning in a foreign country. Indeed, as the responses showed, the very idea of integration understood as "becoming part of the social-cultural and institutional fabric" (Schoorl 2005:1-2) of the Belgian society was so distant to some of my respondents, that they understood the question as referring to integration within the EU institutions or the expat community.

4.3.1.1. Being adapted as understood by Polish EU officials

Although, there is an important variety of approaches toward "adaptation" in academic literature, I wanted to understand the meaning the Polish EU institutions' employees assign to this term. This understanding must be influenced by their experience and would refer, putting it in most simple terms, to what they consider as relevant and conceivable in their social situation.

Some of the interviewees restricted their answer to the definition of the notion of "adaptation", while other complemented it with considerations concerning their adaptation in Brussels.

Among the definitions given, most of the Polish EU officials referred to the capacity to function in the host society, without necessarily participating in its life or sharing the interests of the locals. Patrycja proposed:

> I think … adaptation is the situation in which a person feels at ease in a foreign country … I mean comfortable with everyday life, so whenever he or she has to make decisions about job, school, shopping, administrative issues, he or she knows where to find information or already knows where to go. (Patrycja)

Klara gave a somewhat similar definition, while heavily insisting on the preservation of distinction:

> Absence of the feeling of alienation. … I mean, what comes within this notion is that, while keeping the sense of distinction, or difference, we feel at ease, thus we consider the new environment as ours. This does not mean that we do not feel different or distinct, but it does not produce the lack of comfort ... , we accept our new environment, we consider it as ours, even if we know we are different, or distinct. (Klara)

For Jeremi,

> adaptation means to get knowledge [about] how to live, how to deal with the country: with the federal government, with the local government, with the police, with the shops, with daily life, to know how this country is organized. (Jeremi)

He also believed that adaptation required

> to know the national character of the people. To understand why they are like they are, … to understand the city, the country and the people. (Jeremi)

Maksymilian believed that "adaptation is basically the development of the ability to function smoothly in a certain society, … in a group". He also made an explicit reservation: "but it does not mean of course that I'm becoming a part of a local society, far from that". Also Otylia insisted on a more limited meaning of the notion of "adaptation", as opposed to "integration":

> Adaptation is something which is not complete integration. So, out of respect for the hosts, I take out my shoes and walk barefoot, as they wish so, although I will not require it at my place or even feel completely fine with it, as this is exclusively the question of respect and not standing out of the group, and not necessarily of acceptance. (Otylia)

Adrian discussed the problems that he found challenging in the context of adaptation (in the same "limited" meaning):

> As to adaptation, certainly there are things you need to get used to in Belgium. The weather set aside, e.g., the quality of services with which there are serious problems, many Poles complain about it and not only Poles. I tried to reconcile myself with it, I know this country is a bit different from Poland and I try to live so as to feel at ease here and obviously I have to adapt to certain things. But the term "adaptation"? It is difficult for me to elaborate upon, coin a definition, for example. [It means] tuning in to something, right? (Adrian)

Zofia seemed to subscribe to the same basic understanding of the notion of "adaptation", but she took a more personal approach and described her own experience:

> The first stage when you arrive somewhere is, more or less, … discovery of the country and sometimes a bit of a shock regarding some aspects, or, you know, you really need to make an effort to adjust. And then, the second stage is either that you adapt yourself and you accept your environment or that you don't like it at all and you just keep complaining and you feel you'll never adapt and you just want to leave the place … Now, I'm in this second stage of adaptation that, okay, I know the country more or less, how the administration works, the politics. I cannot say I understand everything, but I feel quite comfortable with what I understand at this stage. And we managed to go through these whole house purchase procedures without any problems, we know this social security system for my husband and how it works with the work system, you know, the education system, because he is working in education [sector], so that was a big step forward also to understand and to adapt ourselves. (Zofia)

This understanding recalls the theory of four stages or "psychological states" of acculturation experienced by migrants according to Alaminos and Santacreu (2009:99).[171]

Similarly as Zofia, also other interviewees referred to the respect of the local traditions and laws. Maja understood adaptation as "learning some rules of co-existence", "adaptation in the environment, so the rules of co-existence or some social rules of the group" and "submission to certain requirements, where it is feasible". She concluded that "this is submission rather than imposing". Dominika elaborated on the differences of habits which one needs to take into account in order to adapt:

> There are certain things that are very different from Poland. People don't visit each other without having, like you know, an appointment before. And if you organize a big party, then you have to invite people in writing most of the time, so, it's different and you have to adapt to that, because if not, you will pass for someone who is not very gentle. (Dominika)

Finally, Stanislaw placed his understanding of adaptation in the context of his perception of multicultural society which must – in his view – be based on respect for the law:

[171] These are: a short state of euphoria, the stage of culture shock, the third stage where migrants "slowly begin to function in the new context" (Alaminos and Santacreu 2009: 99). At the fourth stage, migrants "adopt a stable psychological disposition", possibly different from the one they had in their home country (Alaminos and Santacreu 2009: 99).

> Respect the law of the country where you are coming. This is adaptation. I'm sorry, I keep in mind too many bad examples of people who were overusing the "multi-kulti" policy in Germany. … I'm coming to Belgium not as a refugee, but as somebody who is coming here to work, but for me it's obvious that you have to respect the law of the country where you are staying ... I'm adapting in this sense to the local regulations. (Stanislaw)

Interestingly, his criticism of the multicultural society seemed to go even further, as he gave an example related not that much to the respect for the law, but rather to the eagerness to accept a deeper level of adaptation, going beyond mere respectful co-existence:

> I'm glad that chancellor Merkel criticized this year or last year the "multi-kulti" policy in Germany as too liberal. The best example is that she said openly that the Turkish guys, who are born in Turkey, they have to go to German schools as a primary and only in their free time they can go to the Turkish [school]. This is again my approach. (Stanislaw)

However, while interrogated about his plans concerning the choice of school for his children (European or Belgian), he did not seem to apply the same reasoning to himself:[172]

> It will be much more practical issue [based on] which school is closer. I don't see it much as a decisive fact, okay? We will make the decision according to the location probably. (Stanislaw)

Some of the interviewees also referred to what one of them described as "integration" or "adaptation in the stronger meaning":

> Adaptation in the stronger meaning also would mean understanding of the local policies and local people, but I think, this is … I would even say, more like integration. So, adaptation with integration, then it would be … when you know exactly what's going on here and you're interested in it. (Patrycja)

Filip defined adaptation as "ability to live and draw from public life and social-cultural environment". Also Kamil's definition of adaptation went beyond a mere ability to deal with the everyday life:

> You understand what's going on and you show certain amount of some kind of interest at what's going on. I don't say you must be engaged, because a lot of people even in Poland are not engaged. You don't have problems with orientation in, you know, in the institutional framework if you have to buy something, if you have to fix something, plus you know somebody who is local as well. Yeah, you try to follow maybe media from time to time as well. (Kamil)

[172] More recently, I discussed this issue again with Stanislaw who, in the meantime, had become father. He confirmed that he would still choose between Belgian or European school (French section).

The opinion of Bernard recalled association with the words of Laura Gherardi, who considered "the ability to change one's point of view and way of thinking" as crucial for adaptation (2011:110):

> Adapting to the city involves changing the way one thinks, also, one has to change their attitude, also their expectations. (Bernard)

On the other hand, there were some interviewees, like for instance Darek, who thought that the EU officials are not really expected to adapt and that the communication was the main important requirement:

> I think that, as regards us, the Europeans, we do not need to integrate, adapt to anything, as we are at home here. As long as you are able to communicate with the inhabitants of this city, you should feel well here, but I see no need for changing myself, any adaptation ... We are not the same as the local people, we are slightly different, we have similar values, but this is something different, we are bringing it here and enrich the mix. I think we should not resign on something, or change, so as to live well here. The only requirement is to be able to communicate. (Darek)

Again, this opinion seems to go in the same direction as the proposition of Favell, who argues that the elite migrants do not need to assimilate into the host society, without compromising on their ability to function smoothly in the new environment (2003b:413). Most importantly in this context, Favell believed that:

> Within a regional context, such as the European Union, one would expect then that the Europeanisation of elite cultures will enable European free movers to succeed in any part of Europe, without needing to undergo the kind of socialization to national integration norms that would have hitherto been demanded of all newcomers as a condition of social mobility. (Favell 2003b:413-414)

Curiously, among the persons who backed their answers with comments regarding their own adaptation in Belgium, the issue of communication was mentioned by one of the interviewees in terms of inability to speak easily any of the national Belgian languages. Sebastian remarked:

> That's a very simple indicator. If we were really integrated into the daily life of this country, we would have had this conversation at least in French. … That's one of the indicators of my distance from this country. I can imagine that I speak perfect French; it's not that easy, but okay, given the fact that I don't speak it after five years, but I cannot imagine that I speak perfect Flemish. (Sebastian)

My interviewee referred to the lack of linguistic competence as to a symptom of insufficient adaptation and not as a cause thereof.

4.3.1.2. How does it work in practice?

Two groups of Polish EU officials have been asked a similar, and yet different question. The "old" group, the respondents from my previous research, have been asked a "follow-up" question on whether they felt "integrated" in Belgium. On the other hand, the "new" group, composed to a significant extent of persons who had stayed much shorter in Belgium, have been asked whether it was difficult to adapt to the local culture. The same question was asked to the first group during the previous study,[173] as the difference originates from the assumption that the members of the first group, having stayed in Brussels already for some time, are more likely to develop further going interactions with the local society (and thus they could experience "adaptation in the stronger sense" that they qualify as "integration").

The responses of the first group were mostly, if not all, negative. Only four persons out of 20 firmly stated that they were integrated in Belgium, but their explanations seemed to suggest that they were rather adapted (thus, what the majority of my respondents considered as integration in a weaker sense, covering what Favell (2001a) referred to as "integration in the city") or integrated with the expatriate community. One of them developed:

> Yes, I do feel quite well integrated; I know more or less how things work here in terms of services, administration, cultural events etc. On the other hand, I am not much involved in associative life, my *commune*'s life etc., maybe because I do not have children yet (I've seen that usually families with children, especially if the children go to the local school and not the European school, tend to be better integrated here in Belgium).

A few further respondents stated explicitly they were integrated in the city or that they felt well in the place they lived, but they did not feel a part of the Belgian society. Indeed, many

[173] At that time 20 out of 30 persons did not find it difficult to adapt to the local culture. However, it must be stressed that some of them regarded the "local culture" not as Belgian, but rather as "international mix", and this could explain the easiness of adaptation. Only one third of the participants found adaptation difficult, while many of them were not even able to delineate the "local culture" in the Belgian context (Rozanska 2009).

of the Polish EU officials who are granted life-long employment seem to attach to the place where they come to live. For example, one of the men confessed:

> Yes and no. I feel at home in Brussels, especially in Jette. I've met some nice people, both Belgian and international. I like my quarter. I've developed a routine which makes me feel familiar. On the other hand, I do not feel a part of the Belgian or Brussels society, I am not concerned with their problems and do not share their interests. I think they will always perceive me as a stranger and will never accept me 100 per cent but I'm fine with it.

Similarly, one of the female participants nuanced:

> It depends what you mean by this question… I am not integrated in Belgium in the sense of the Belgian society as I do not need it. I feel very good in Polish and international community living here. On the other hand, I am well integrated in Belgium as a place to live, as I found my favourite places and people here, I enjoy living here and I am not homesick anymore.

Again, it should be observed that this distinction (integration in space as opposed to integration in a community) was already described by Favell who wrote about expatriates in Brussels that their networks and cultural activities may not intersect with those of Belgians, but are evidence of a strong integration into the city which enabled these activities (see also Favell 2001a:47; 2008a:54). In Favell's approach, "a person can be perfectly well 'integrated' into Brussels life, while knowing no Belgians at all" (2001a:47). However, the notion of integration refers to a cultural or social process and must always translate into a specific relation with a population. Thus, Favell's (2001a) "integration into a city" can be understood either as deeper integration with the international strata of the city or as simply adaptation to, without integration with the local society (here: Belgians).

Finally, numerous respondents wrote they were well integrated in the expat society and that they did not feel the need to integrate with Belgians. One respondent wrote:

> [I feel integrated] only in the expat community, not in Belgium as such, [I] don't have any Belgian friends or colleagues and I'm not really interested in the BE[lgian] politics etc.

Another one stated:

> Not really. I am still integrated rather with the expat community and I have few contacts with Belgians that are not either colleagues or Polish colleagues' spouses.

Yet another person admitted that she evolved mostly within the Polish circle:

> Not really, we kept with the Polish society. My newborn is in *crèche* now where the only spoken language is French, so I have a motivation to learn it better. At work I use mainly English.

Some respondents complained about the impermeability of the Belgian society and in certain cases, their attachment to common stereotypes on Eurocrats that excludes any deeper interaction:

> No, I do not feel welcome. "True Belgians" show little desire to interact with international officials, whom they hold responsible for the hike in property prices etc.

One person developed:

> I do not feel integrated with Belgium. Given the number of expats living in the country the public administration is not prepared well to serve the purpose. Only good knowledge of the official languages can open the gates to normal treatment. Having won the battle over building own house I decided to learn the language of my new commune. Also the Belgians are very introvert and are not open to new friendships. The Belgian Police do not serve its purpose and in general I do not feel safe in here.

Finally, a few persons indicated that they did not feel the need to integrate with the host society, for example,

> No and I don't want to. The country seems to be falling apart so the idea of being "integrated" in it seems rather frightening.

By contrast, the members of the new group, asked whether they thought it was difficult to adapt, mostly claimed that adaptation in Belgium is easy or even unnecessary. As it clearly results from responses to interview questions, if "integration" was understood as becoming a part of the local society, adaptation was seen rather as the ability to smoothly function in this society, without necessarily establishing any stronger links with it.

The only person who firmly confirmed that adaptation is difficult clearly had different understanding of adaptation from the one mentioned above:

> Yes, Belgians seem to be a closed community.

Some other persons emphasized their isolation from the host society, putting in question the sense of any considerations pertaining to adaptation. One person responded:

> I have few interactions with the local culture and I see a limited need to adapt. The part of society I belong to is the international expat community related to the European institutions.

> The only Belgian I know well is my former colleague from the company I worked at in Berlin a few years ago. In Brussels, I have not really met that many Belgians.

Another person remarked:

> I do not think that being an EU citizen you really need to adapt to living in another EU country unless for your own curiosity. I think that EU citizens should feel at home in all other EU MS [member states] without much effort or any "planned" action of adaptation – for me this is not really a priority here although I would like to somehow extend my knowledge about current affair in Belgian politics etc.

One female respondent expressed even a more radical opinion:

> No, Brussels is an international place, there is no need to adapt to the local, Belgian culture, one can stay within the international environment which is at least for me, very easy to adapt to.

She did not even envisage a possibility of having any closer contact with local population, as it was not necessary to leave the international circle. The same idea could be identified in numerous responses: "No. Due to the high number of expats the contact with the local culture is minimal"; "I find I adapted to the Brussels expat culture, I have only limited contact with the authentic 'local' culture"; "I do not find it difficult; I am mostly surrounded by a 'European' culture (not Belgian) of which I am a member, and therefore it is rather a natural environment for me". One of the female respondents developed a bit more on this issue, referring to the concept of "international bubble":

> I feel that I live as if in an international bubble rather and in parallel to rather than fully assimilating into the local culture. When I was in the UK, I remember fully following politics etc. in the UK and being surrounded by British friends. In Belgium it is a bit different – most friends are from other EU countries but only a few are Belgian and it feels like living in a "neutral" country rather than assimilating. In terms of culture, I go to certain events, drink Belgian beer etc. – but I might not be aware of many of local habits/cultures. In this context, there was actually not that much adapting.

Another group of respondents apparently had some contact with the local population, although – as it can be concluded from their responses – rather a superficial one. One person explained that the language is the key to the local culture: "No, if you are willing and you try to speak one of the languages, you are welcome". Kamil confirmed this impression: "No, but the language is the biggest barrier". These statements are not surprising, they validate this intuitive view, confirmed by researches (see e.g., Kennedy 2009:26; Nowicka and Kaweh

2009:61). Another respondent, apparently in the same situation as his "alienated" colleagues, found nevertheless contacts with Belgians quite easy and showed quite a proactive approach with this regard:

> As an expat I do not have much contact with the local community. Most of my friends are expats, too. But I have no difficulties to find my way when among local people. I also participate in many events organised by Belgian cultural organisations.

One of the men found adaptation easy mostly due to the lack of dominant local culture:

> No, not at all. In my opinion Brussels, due to the internal divisions is very easy to adapt – it is not such a strong and unified community as French in Paris.

Another research participant apparently alluded to the same phenomenon, when he asked jokingly: "Not at all. Is there any local culture here?"

The respondents quoted above found adaptation to be a non-issue but, as they admitted, had a very limited contact with the host society and some of them did not even speak any of the local languages. In fact, these circumstances may, paradoxically, explain their lack of need to adapt. Alaminos and Santacreu suggested that, although even within the Western European cultural circle the perception of being discriminated against also happens, the occurrence of social interactions coupled with the ability to perceive the nuances of the social reality (often related to the ability of understanding the language) are necessary conditions for this perception to take place (2009:112).

However, some other respondents seemed to have detected some local culture. One woman said: "No, I don't [find it difficult to adapt]. I live my 'own culture' and the culture of the local place". Another person, a man, elaborated:

> Not particularly. We actively try to learn about aspect of local culture (especially in the micro-scale, e.g., the local developments and traditions in Schaerbeek). Our main point of contact with Belgians is our daughters' school – we actively try to participate in all the events involving parents to try to build some contacts with Belgians and to learn about daily local habits.

Some other respondents gave brief answers ("no"), while one person was explicitly enthusiastic about the ability of the host society to make it easy for expats:

> No, I did not have that problem. The Belgians are rather open-minded, very used to live with the international community, therefore with some effort and self-confidence adaptation is not difficult.

4.3.1.3. Eagerness and ability to speak the local languages: evolution

As it was already described by some authors (notably Shore 2000; Bellier 2002), the EU institutions' employees are not only multilingual (Abélès et al. 1993:31; Suvarierol 2011:187), constantly switching between different languages (usually English, French and their mother tongue) (Shore 2000:188), but have also coined their own *jargon* ("Franglais"/Frenglish (Bellier 2002:82) or "Eurospeak" (Bellier 2005:14)) (see e.g., Bellier 2000a, 2000b, 2002, 2005; Shore 2000; Abélès 2000; Abélès et al. 1993; McDonald 2002). As language can be, one of the "surface pointers" ("markers of difference") (Nash 1989:10-12), this linguistic specificity certainly is relevant for the relation between the EU officials and the city and its different communities. Language may affect identification and constitute an important factor influencing adaptation in a new cultural context. This is even more so in case of expatriates living in an environment where the language spoken is one of the main boundaries dividing different autochthonous communities.

On the other hand, it is argued that despite the multicultural environment in which they evolve, many of the EU officials, seeking the opportunity to speak their mother tongue (Suvarierol 2011:191; 2007:150; Bellier 2002; Hooghe 2001:105; Abélès 2004:7-8), join "national networks and places of socialization where they feel more comfortable" (Bellier 2002: 84). Not knowing the local language is seen as a factor contributing to seclusion and separation from the host society (Nowicka and Kaweh 2009; Kennedy 2009; Coles and Walsh 2010).

As the results gathered during my previous research (Rozanska 2009) revealed, surprisingly, almost a half of the respondents knew, at that time, none of the official

languages in Brussels at arrival. A lot of persons mastered French, while no one spoke Dutch. Slightly more than a half of the respondents did not find it important to learn both of the official languages in Brussels, including especially those living in the French speaking area and mastering the local language. By contrast, those living in a francophone area usually recognized the importance of learning French "because the Walloons[174] do not always speak English", while in the Flemish area some people considered that the lack of knowledge of Dutch was not affecting them significantly as: "Dutch speaking people are very much willing to speak English".

Half of the research participants said that French was the language they spoke most often outside the office. Other most spoken languages in the extra-professional environment were English (most often), Polish and Italian (the latter probably partly due to the fact that several female EU officials studied were married to Italians). These results could be interpreted as showing a high level of independence from the Polish linguistic circle.

The same question was asked to the new group. When questioned about the local languages they spoke at the arrival, 20 (out of 30) persons pointed at French, while two persons spoke Dutch (including a woman who spoke both French ("fluently") and Dutch ("at the communicative level"), and a man who spoke only Dutch. As many as nine respondents did not speak any of the local languages at the arrival.

Only five persons found it important to learn both languages. One person gave her personal opinion: "I guess you can easily get by speaking none of the two – only English, but then I think it's nice to speak at least one of the languages of the country you live in. And [it is] helpful too".

Nonetheless, a great majority (24 persons) did not find it important to learn both French and Dutch. As one of them explained: "while coming to Belgium I thought it was

[174] It is common among the Polish EU officials to refer to all French speaking population as "Walloons".

important to learn both of the languages, but after several years, I have understood that French is absolutely enough". Another person said it was not important, "although helpful". A female respondent explained: "it is embarrassing to say … but I have not tried to learn Flemish and probably will not – just because it is so easy to communicate in French and English (especially with Flemish speaking great English!)". Overall, the results confirm the conclusions that could be drawn on the basis of the previous research.

When asked about the language most often used by them outside the office (with more than one indication possible), 15 persons wrote it was Polish, 21 persons - English, six - French. Nobody indicated Dutch, while four persons mentioned other languages, such as: German, Russian or Spanish. As compared to the previous research, the number of persons speaking mainly English in their private relations was much higher, what can be interpreted as owing to more intensive contacts with EU officials of other nationalities and other expatriates.

After a few years separating my first and current researches, the majority of the respondents have learnt at least one of the local languages. It is also striking that, contrary to common beliefs, many of the EU officials interrogated have learnt some Dutch.

As many as 12 (out of 20) respondents from the old group observed the improvement of their language skills. Three persons amongst those who spoke French upon the arrival were learning or planning to learn also Dutch. As Filip elaborated during the interview:

> No, I am not learning Dutch [at the moment]. I learnt it in the past. I'm also planning to continue. This is also the reason why I'm enrolled to a Flemish music school - I thought I could learn a bit of the language there. However, they are simply too friendly with me and I'm not able to learn Dutch as they speak English with me. It is not possible to learn the language here as people too rarely speak Dutch and they are too gentle, too lenient with those who do not learn the language.

For eight persons the linguistic skills stayed at the same level during the last three years.

It was particularly interesting to compare the actual improvement of linguistic skills

with attitudes declared during the original research. The two oldcomer women who did not find it important to learn both official languages of Brussels now were either speaking both or were even working in both of them. In fact, one of them had already spoken fluent French upon arrival (16 years ago), whereas the other did not master any of the local languages 22 years ago - when she moved to Belgium.

Four persons who found it important to learn both languages implemented their opinions in real life and they are learning them or already speaking both; whereas five persons who found it important to learn them both in the past still did not speak (even if tried to learn) or not even made any effort to learn them.

The opinions of nine persons who did not find it important to learn both local languages in the past remained stable. One of the women explained: “I master only French. I do not like Dutch and I do not think I will ever need it.” Likewise, another female respondent did not see any importance of learning Dutch, but her explanation was quite different: “[I speak] perfect French. [I] do not consider learning Flemish because of the very strong racism of the Flemish people.” Another woman elaborated on the language issues: “I master the French but not the Flemish and I am not learning Flemish as I don’t have the time and this language is not necessary either to my work or to my personal life.” Yet another woman was not learning Dutch herself, however, as she mentioned, “her husband was [doing it] for job searching purposes”.

The patterns described above indicate that the attitude of my respondents to the official languages in Brussels was mostly very pragmatic, driven by the need to communicate in everyday life situations or, probably, at work (French is one of the Commission working languages and its command, at least rudimentary, is strongly encouraged by the institution). That is why Polish EU officials learn French and find important to do it. By contrast, only very few persons found it important to, or actually did learn Dutch, as this language is not

perceived as necessary for successful adaptation. The intention to learn Dutch can be interpreted as a sign of the ambition to integrate more in the Belgian society, but also as seizing the opportunity to improve one's linguistic skills for future professional purposes.

4.3.1.4. Spatial arrangements: leaving an EU bubble?

Certain features of the separation in space described by authors performing research on Western expatriates in culturally and economically different context are clearly related to the characteristics of life in the situation of poor security, insufficient hygiene and sanity, or strongly differing culture of the host society (see e.g., Fechter 2007a, 2007b; E. Cohen 1977) or "in countries where armed conflicts, terror attacks or high criminality are common", where expatriates "reside in Western compounds, which offer them security and a certain living standard" (Nowicka and Kaweh 2009:61). Therefore, the relevance of such features for the present work is limited. Indeed, whatever the perception of Brussels may be by expatriates, their spatial separation certainly does not result from fear of violence, poison, health-threatening dirt or extreme weather conditions.

However, the phenomenon of spatial seclusion of expatriates is not unknown also in cases where the cultural difference is not so important, like in the Western world. Erik Cohen even suggests that expatriates "tend to barricade themselves behind the walls of their "environmental bubbles" and to develop a very low propensity for adjustment" (1977:57; see also: Gatti 2009; Favell 2001a, 2003a, 2008a).

Several authors (e.g., Shore 2000; Bellier 2002; Cailliez 2004; Favell 2008a) elaborated on how boundaries, conceived in terms of the "segregation" of space, are traced in Brussels. Indeed, they found that most of affluent, highly skilled professionals lived in several, mostly southern and eastern districts in nearly complete spatial isolation from the host society. This enclavement (Shore 2000:161) is believed to be common among the EU

staff, as they tend to settle in certain middle - or upper middle class districts of Brussels, such as Woluwe St. Pierre, Woluwe St. Lambert, Auderghem or Watermael-Boisfort (Bellier 2002; Cailliez 2004; Shore 2000; Suvarierol 2007, 2009). The phenomenon would be triggered by the fact that newcomers evolve predominantly within the environment of the EU officials since they come to Brussels, they follow their advice and seek to settle in their neighbourhood (Bellier 2002; Cailliez 2004). Suvarierol also observes that "EU ghettos" are characteristic for the neigbourhoods of the European School (2009, 2007; see also Cailliez 2004; Janssens 2008).

One of the objectives of this research was to examine whether the same patterns applied to Polish EU officials.

4.3.1.4.1. The current spatial arrangement of the Polish EU officials

My previous research (Rozanska 2009) has shown that this phenomenon of spatial seclusion in expat enclaves in Brussels did not take place in case of the Polish EU officials. Some of my respondents chose to live in trendy, youthful municipalities such as Bruxelles-Louise, Ixelles[175] or Saint-Gilles. Another group lived outside Brussels, often in French-speaking municipalities, preferred for linguistic reasons. One third of the respondents lived in one of the central municipalities (Saint-Josse-ten-Noode, Bruxelles 1000 or Etterbeek). The most obvious explanation for these choices was a relatively smaller purchasing power of the newcomers, coupled with ever growing prices of flats in the "posh" areas.[176] At that time, one could observe the beginning of gradual migration to "better" municipalities.

Amongst the most important factors influencing settlement choices of the EU

[175] According to Favell, situated in proximity to the European quarter, Ixelles is "the best example of a cosmopolitan Europeanized neighbourhood", as it is inhabited mostly by young European expatriate newcomers, attracted by their friends' networks or leisure options (2008a:128). Indeed, the progressive gentrification of such municipalities as Ixelles, Saint-Gilles, or Schaerbeek, initially abandoned by Belgian middle class inhabitants, is predominantly thanks to European expats (Favell 2003b:420).

[176] Affordable price of real estates was notably quoted as the reason of settling in such districts as Schaerbeek or Jette (Rozanska 2009:69).

officials, Cailliez quoted such factors as proximity of certain infrastructure (e.g., shops, entertainment, public transport), proximity of work office and schools (2004:38). Besides, her respondents mentioned such factors as: tranquility, spaciousness, greenness of the neighbourhood, but also its atmosphere as important factors (Cailliez 2004:39). Some of her informants were opting for areas inhabited by their acquaintances (Cailliez 2004:39). However, as Janssens observed, the possibility of communication in a mastered language was yet another factor influencing settlement choices (2008:432).

Out of the persons inquired in the "new group", no one lived in the aforementioned traditionally "expat districts" in the Eastern part of the city, except for a more mixed Auderghem (two persons).

Not all respondents from the new group answered this question. Eight persons (out of 30) declared living in Etterbeek, seven in Schaerbeek, five in Ixelles, four persons lived in Brussels 1000, while two in Auderghem. One person from the new group lives in Jette and one in Woluwe St. Stevens.

The respondents of the new group also revealed their motivations for choosing the place to live. Several participants chose Etterbeek because of its proximity to work. One of them added: "yet far enough for you not to have the feeling you live at work", another one specified that it was also close to "metro, park, shops, ring". One respondent seemed to appreciate the character of this municipality: "this seems to be the most tolerant and international part of the city with a lot going on around. In my view, this is the best choice for a person without family obligations. Restaurants, bars and friends living near by." Another male respondent, explained he had chosen to live in Etterbeek as it is "close to work, to squares (Pl. Jourdan, Flagey) with their markets, cafés etc., parks around, good transportation; I don't like to use car and this localisation does not force me to do so." People who had chosen to live in Ixelles praised this location for being "relatively safe and quiet but

close to downtown and work", "close to work, lively".

The inhabitants of Schaerbeek valued "proximity to work (walking distance) and lower prices of apartments", the fact that the district was "fairly central, walking distance to work, safe" and had "good public transport connections". Some other respondents said that it was "aesthetically pleasing and … safe", "nice, close to a beautiful park, quiet, walking distance to the office" or praised its "great architecture, close to the center and affordable". One person elaborated on the reasons for choosing this district:

> We were looking for an affordable neighbourhood in the city centre (within minutes from Schuman on foot or by bike) where we could afford a large family house. Also very important was the architectural quality of the immediate surroundings and the house itself. We also wanted to avoid Eurocrat enclaves. We picked a neighbourhood which we think is architecturally beautiful, yet it is affordable hence it is highly mixed in socio-economic and ethnic terms.

Brussels 1000 was prized for such qualities as: "close to work, on the metro line"; "close to European quarter". As one of the male respondents revealed "I did not know the city when I was looking for a place to live, so I chose the apartment I liked most".

Those two respondents who lived in Auderghem cherished its proximity to work ("I chose it because it is a compromise between my place of work, my husband's place of work and the European School in Uccle. I wanted to be able to get home from work quickly"), but also its suburban charm ("I was attracted by its relaxed suburban atmosphere and good public transport").

Finally, a person who lived in Jette seemed to consider it as "quiet, not a typical expat neighbourhood", but featuring "good infrastructure", while Woluwe St. Steven was chosen "due to good road access to the area [of work], combined with relatively low houses price in a nice, high quality residential area".

Overall, the new group typically settled in one of the municipalities surrounding the European quarter, such as Etterbeek, Ixelles, "better" Schaerbeek, 1000 Brussels and Auderghem. Their motivation was mainly proximity to work, good transport connection and

safety, but there were also motivations typical for each of these places: international, expatriate character of Etterbeek, "liveliness" of Ixelles, or small-town charm of Auderghem. The few who lived in Jette appreciated its safety and good infrastructure, but also considered it to be more "truly Belgium", with lower concentration of expats.

Therefore, it seems that the new group mimicked the settlement patterns of the "old group" several years ago. They looked for ambiance, "truly Belgian" experience, proximity to work and lower prices – and thus were not interested in living in districts traditionally inhabited by EU officials. Nevertheless, the "old group", after a few years, mostly followed the example of their colleagues and moved to Eurocratic districts. However, the reasons for this seem to be related to the evolution of their lifestyle and preferences rather than to intensive socialisation within their DG, as suggested by Bellier (2002:86). Indeed, Etterbeek and Ixelles are very urban and lively quarters, probably too noisy and boisterous for families with children, but perfect for younger, socially active people. Woluwe or Wezembeek-Oppem are typical family districts, "boring", but green, safe and good looking, by contrast quite expensive.

Altogether, while taking into account the answers from both groups, among those living in the city of Brussels, only six persons lived in 1000 Brussels (perhaps even less, as in two cases it was impossible to understand whether the respondents referred to a district or to the whole city), while as much as 11 persons declared living in Etterbeek, eight in Ixelles, seven in Schaerbeek (only persons from the new group), three in Auderghem and three in Jette. Two persons chose Woluwe St. Lambert, one person Woluwe St. Pierre and one Watermael Boitsfort. The participants from the follow up group living outside of Brussels mentioned such "posh" municipalities as Wezembeek Oppem, Kraainem or Genval, but also Braine- l'Alleud. Additionally, one person from the new group lives in Woluwe St. Stevens.

4.3.1.4.2. Evolution in spatial arrangements of the follow up group

Based on her research on British EU officials, Cailliez observed that young officials would, after several years of living in Brussels, move from their original locations (usually close to work, often in European district) to residential, South-East parts of Brussels (Auderghem, Uccle, Watermael-Boitsfort, Woluwé-St-Lambert or Woluwé-St-Pierre) or peripheral areas of Brussels. She explained this movement with personal changes at the family level (marriages or having children) (Cailliez 2004:32). As she found out, although proximity of work was still cherished by many, the importance of this factor diminishes with time (ibid.:40-41).

As my previous research reflected the beginning of the phenomenon of belated "migration" to more "Eurocratic" areas, I wanted to verify whether, several years later, the Polish EU officials adhered to the pattern common for other EU officials.

Out of 20 persons from the follow-up group, only eight did not move during the last three years (since the previous research). Five persons moved to one of the typical enclaves inhabited by expats, such as Woluwe St. Pierre, Woluwe St. Lambert (two persons), Wezembeek-Oppem or Kraainem. Moving to one of these areas was usually explained by a purchase of a house in the district. In one case it was motivated by a "more green and calm" character of the district. One person, on the contrary, has left Woluwe St. Lambert, in order to buy a bigger flat in Brussels. Buying a house (or a flat) was also a motivation for people moving to other areas, such as Jette (two respondents). One person explained moving to Genval by changes in her personal life. Two persons moved to Brussels or Watermael-Boisfort in order to live closer to their work, one person simply did not like the previous flat. By contrast, one of the male respondents explained: "I moved twice, mostly due to starting part-time work. I just didn't need an apartment all of the time in the first place. I also couldn't afford the old apartment on part-time wages." One of the women moved with her Flemish husband from Flanders to Brussels [although she and her husband kept the house in the

countryside to spend there weekends]. As she explained, "The motivation [was] - two small children, so we did not want to spend too much time commuting." Although, while completing the questionnaires, the respondents did not explicitly pointed at marriages and children as reasons for moving out from previous locations (which was pointed out by Cailliez 2004:32), many of them mentioned it during the interviews or occasional conversations. During the interview, Adrian reflected on a specific trend within the Polish EU institutions circle:

> Before, I used to live in the European district in Brussels, but now I live in Etterbeek. However, it is still the same … circle – notably these are always the surroundings of Schuman, Merode – for the last eight years. An important number of my friends live there. However, the friends who are now in couples, who got married, or have children, more and more often leave. And I think that with time it will be similarly as it was the case with other groups. And not necessarily these European districts. I have many acquaintances who live outside of Brussels and I think that there is such a process, that will not stop, and which will be natural with time- that people will keep on escaping from the center of Brussels in the direction of suburbs, or completely out of Brussels once they have children or once they will have such a need of stabilisation. But at the beginning, for sure … Well, it's been already seven years I'm here, it's difficult to call it 'the beginning", but I like it here, in this district. (Adrian)

It can be concluded that the majority of my respondents "originating" from my former research changed their place of living, often moving to wealthier and quiet neighbourhoods, where they often acquired houses. Such neighbourhoods included the two Woluwes, Auderghem or "posh" municipalities outside Brussels (such as Wezembeek Oppem, Kraainem or Genval).

Subsequently, I asked the interviewees questions aiming at verifying their involvement in public activity: whether they were interested in issues concerning their immediate surrounding.

4.3.1.5. Interest in local matters

EU officials, contrary to expats, often settle in Brussels for life. Moreover, it is with this assumption, or at least admitting such possibility, that they already come to Brussels. Even if

they do not sometimes exclude leaving the institutions in the future, their assignment is theoretically unlimited (except for contract or temporary staff) and this should, in principle, strongly affect their behaviour, but also their attitude to the local population and, more generally, to the place where they live. Based on Favell's study it would seem that not only EU officials, but also other foreigners were able to establish "connections ... with local life" (Favell 2008a:54). The author stresses that such "functional integration" into the city, the multinational (or denationalized) space, does not require integration into national culture (2008a:136). On the other hand, several authors claim that European foreigners in Brussels usually do not participate in the city's life (see e.g., Calay and Magosse 2008:494-495; Favell 2001a; Shore 2000; Cailliez 2004).

At this point, I wanted to verify whether my interviewees felt sufficient ownership of the place they inhabited so as to get involved in the life of their quarter. This could be political or cultural activity, but also mere interest in the issues concerning their immediate surrounding. Only very few of my interviewees (4 out of 21) admitted they were not following at all the information concerning their quarter. Surprisingly, one of them was a person living in Belgium already before the Poland's accession to the European Union. As this interviewee explained, there was "not so much life" in the little municipality in Wallonia where she lived. Beniamin did not explain his attitude, succinctly stating that he did not have any interest at all. Bernard, on the other hand, was one of not so many interviewees who had registered as a voter. However, according to his own statement, "that was it": "Other than this? Do I do anything special? No, not really".

The only person out of this category who gave a more elaborate explanation was Sebastian:

> Absolutely not [laughter]. Very limited, very limited. I live in Ixelles and so there is now a campaign for the local elections to which I obviously will not vote because of the obvious reason - because it's obligatory, so I don't want to impose on myself the obligation which I absolutely do not need. And when I receive those materials connected with the local election

> campaign, I really cannot find any interest in those things and being honest, there is no reason why I should be interested …Oh, I don't own the apartment, I rent it, right? So I can move to different districts ... Second, I don't have kids, so I'm not interested in the school issue. I don't use public transport. I'm not ill, so I don't go to hospital. Why should I be interested in my district? And the street is clean, so everything is fine. (Sebastian)

This last explanation seems to go in the same direction that the findings of Favell, who remarked that the quality of life and degree of satisfaction of Brussels expatriates is high enough that they "feel no great pressure to get involved for social change"(2001a:43). However, as it was mentioned before, EU officials' stay in Brussels is usually meant to be permanent.

Indeed, the majority of my interviewees showed some degree of interest in the local affairs. Many of them limited their interest to certain information, selected either based on the accessibility criterion or on the thematic criterion. The first category was formed of the interviewees who admitted to profit from the information that was directly given to them, and not actively searching for it. Patrycja said:

> Not that I'm actively looking for this information, but whenever I get the local *bulletin*, they are sending this newspaper every, I think, two weeks or once per month, then I'm always reading it, so I know if there are some construction works, … But it's not that I'm [actively looking for it] … I'm just curious of what is going on or also if there are some streets where there are, how to call it… *brocante*, so this I know. But, if I've never got this newspaper, I would never look for it, so it's just because it comes there and I just read it. (Patrycja)

Similarly, Emilia admitted she was reading the information "given to her", without taking the initiative to search for details:

> [I'm interested in the local matters] to a limited extent I would say. So, the infrastructure, okay, to some extent, when the information ready is given to me, so I'm not searching for it. It comes to me, okay, I absorb it, I'm interested, but I'm not deliberately looking for details or I'm not following political life in my district, no, this is not the case. Okay, I'm interested in what's happening in the neighborhood, but it's also not very intensive I would say [chuckle]. (Emilia)

Also Klara acknowledged: "I am interested in the information we receive from the municipality and I am trying to follow everything, which concerns the municipality's life".

As to the second group, a couple of interviewees stated they looked mostly for information that concerned them personally, and that had impact on them. Maksymilian expressed this attitude in the most explicit manner:

> Well, certainly I am interested in things which concern me directly. So, I'm definitely interested in the issue of the [new tramway line] because, well, of course, when I bought the flat I thought that tramway would be there in a couple of years, but then some people protested against it. The construction was blocked for a couple of years and, well, this kind of things definitely interest me because it concerns the quality of my life, but, well of course, I try, let's say, to know when there is any festival in my district or some kind of Sunday fair or this kind of things, but I cannot say that I am extremely involved in the political, or social or cultural life of my district, no. (Maksymilian)

Aleksandra presented roughly the same attitude, although she put it in a more succinct manner: "Very selfishly unfortunately, what's of specific interest, like infrastructural projects and if they would impact me, then I follow them, but I'm not so involved in local politics or voting".

On the other hand, some of the interviewees declared the lack of interest for certain spheres of activity, mostly politics. As Filip put it: "Cultural life, yes, political life: a little. Too little. There are elections and I do not know whom I should vote for, right? [chuckle]". Filip at least registered as a voter (in the local elections), while most of the respondents had not done it. However, there seems to be little correlation between registering for the election and the intensity of the declared involvement in political life.

Those of my interviewees who declared any deeper involvement in local affairs explained it usually either by referring to their civic responsibility or by genuine interest in local cultural and political activities. For Maja, the turning point seems to be the purchase of a house in Belgium (curiously, the fact of being only a tenant was referred to by Sebastian as justification for the absence of civic involvement): "Yes, yes. Because two years ago we bought a house and thus we are kind of citizens already, so yes, to the extent possible".

This feeling of citizenship seemed to be a particularly important motivation for Stanislaw:

> Just behind the corner there is a sport centre. I'm going to this sport centre. I feel responsible for my street. Whenever I see some trashes on the street, I put them to the dustbin, they know that I'm waving my small Polish flag, but [they] treat me all like a neighbour, and I'm also interested in seeing all my neighbours. I'm for assimilation, for being an active member as a Polish, for being an active member of a community in Forest and respecting their law all the time. (Stanislaw)

Laura actually has Belgian nationality, so for her, a minimum involvement was a question of legal obligation. However, her interest seemed to go far beyond the compulsory voting:

> Well, perforce, as well, as I have the obligation to vote. I have the nationality, so, I have to be interested. Besides, there are so many things here, that sometimes, you have to push it forward, as the Belgians are very passive and if someone does not put one's foot down, also while the elections approach, different things can be pushed through, as then, they finally start working [laughter]. (Laura)

The sphere that seemed to be neglected was definitely the political life. As they said, it was "too difficult to follow". Some of the interviewees admitted that their interest in the political sphere was far too little. However, overall eight interviewees enrolled to vote in the local elections. Darek showed enormous interest also in the political life, motivated not that much by abstract "citizenship" or "civicity", but by the need to protect Polish inhabitants' interests:

> Yes, of course. I even decided to enrol for the local elections which are going to take place on October 14, I mean [for] Brussels 1000. I am definitely interested, as I see the increasing influence of the foreigners (not from Europe) on the policy of the city of Brussels and I would like to make a difference by voting, if possible, even for the Poles, although there are no Poles in this electoral region, but I think we are so numerous that we should have some representatives. This is impossible that only the Moroccans, out of the foreigners, have their representatives, and not the Poles, while we are a dozen of thousands here, in Brussels and no one is able to speak to us, right? I enrolled for the elections for this reason, this time it is impossible to vote for Polish people, so I will find someone from a purely Belgian party and not the foreigners who are Muslim and have completely different views and would like to impose their fancies to all inhabitants. (Darek)

Ksawery also showed genuine interest in local issues, although he was not so much focused on political life and his motivation also seemed not to be of political order:

> Yes, [I am interested in the issues of my neighbourhood], very much so. I live in a small city of Braine-l'Alleud in the North Brabant Wallonie, which you know,[177] and that city is quite active in social life and there are many events of cultural and societal nature in which I

[177] I visited the interviewee at home during my previous research.

> participate. Especially I pick up the family activities, outdoor activities that happen there and that are often related to the local life and I'm also very much interested in the infrastructural projects that go on there, there are many such initiatives, there is also a quite active political life. In Belgium we will have also local elections, so I observe those processes and I participate in them. (Ksawery)

A number of interviewees had an attitude similar to Ksawery's, namely a genuine interest motivated by the will to participate in cultural, political and social activities. This was, for instance, the case of Ula:

> Yeah, I mean, since we've moved here, there are lots of events organized by the *commune*. We try to go and see and this is very interesting and I like this organization here that in your little world, which is the *commune*, lots of things happen and they keep you informed and you really feel like a part of these people. (Ula)

Overall, most of the EU officials interviewed showed some interest in local issues, although the majority of them limited their attention to certain categories of information. A clear minority was more interested in political or cultural life. One can conclude that this pattern indicates a comparable or somewhat stronger level of involvement than this is normally the case of "expats" (see Favell 2001a, 2010).

As the next step, I asked my interviewees whether they were active in associative life.

4.3.1.6. Social activities and associative life

Associative life can play a major role in the integration of migrants or expatriates, both positive or, if it is limited to exclusive, foreign circles, negative. For instance, Fechter described the importance of wives' associations on building the expatriate community (Fechter 2007a:44, 48). Leonard stressed the importance of clubs in "structuring the social fabric" (2010b:1255). On the other hand, it should be mentioned that the associative tradition is not very strong in the Polish society. From this perspective, participation in associations might even be considered as a sign of successful acculturation. For this reason, in addition to the interest in the local issues I tried to assess the intensity of the associative life of the Polish EU officials, as well as their involvement in other forms of organised social activities.

The majority of my interviewees did not participate in any structured, organized activity of associative type. Only seven of them (thus one-third of the interviewees) were permanent members of any associations. Although many of them practiced sport, sometimes using club facilities, only Zofia and Sebastian were actually members of any clubs organising sport-oriented social activities. Zofia was a member of the Yoga Association of the European institutions, organizing also weekend yoga activities. She has also been involved in gardening activities since she bought a house with a garden. This permitted her to socialise with some retired people. Likewise, Sebastian was involved in sport activities and he took it quite seriously. He was a member of a Runners Club and a Canoe Club. He also participated in activities with a circle of tango lovers. Maja participated in the cultural life of the Polish diaspora in Brussels, as she sang in a Polish choir in a church (although she was not religious) and she "liked that it's Polish". She also belonged to some sport clubs and she envisaged to get involved in organised social activities with a Parents' Committee in the maternity school of her two children. Also Filip belonged to a school ensemble, whereas Stanislaw was a member of as much as three different clubs:

> I'm a member of [international club with a section in Brussels]. … I'm officially a member of the Russian club here, but I'm going on various lectures just to improve my knowledge and according to my interests. I'm interested in Balkans for example. ... And the Alumni Club of my studies, which is active here in Brussels. We have regular meetings for people who used to study there. (Stanislaw)

Kamil was the only one involved in true charity activity:

> Yes, I'm in this Oxfam NGO, I'm in the Commission chess club … I'm a member of Couchsurfers' organization, but this is not really formal. You don't have to sign any declaration or whatever, but okay, I'm on Couchsurfing. Plus, the Green Party, but this is now just formality, because I'm not actively engaged besides paying some monthly … fees, so that's about the organizations. (Kamil)

Finally, Darek was involved in both political and cultural activity:

> Half-professionally, half privately, I am member and vice-president of a trade union at my job, which allows for contacts with Poles and, obviously, administration on issues concerning our employment. More privately, I am the founder and animator of a chess-club and we organise meetings once per month. Besides, I practice no sports. (Darek)

Out of the majority of the interviewees who did not belong to any association, some nevertheless emphasized their involvement in social activities. For instance, Adrian said:

> I mean, in such a formalised organisation, no, I am not member of any. We were trying to launch a Polish club in Brussels, which unfortunately didn't work too much. I was organising, for a while, Polish speaking meetings – kind of "Polish tables" for non-Poles speaking Polish, for them to have contacts with Poles. I organised probably five [such meetings]. Later, I must admit, I've had no time to deal with it. I participated in the organisation of WOŚP and i.a. I co-organised a concert this year. That's where I helped with various different activities, so this is also an element of the "Polish" activism, for sure ... All this, it was not really formalised, but it had some ... effects. (Adrian)

Laura expressed her a priori reluctance towards organizations and associations, but declared eagerness to "help":

> No, no organised structures [for me], as I am still of the old system. I am very allergic to everything what is organised structures, like parties, no way I could join any party. I can help, for instance, the Women's Party, I would gladly go there and listen what they have to say, but I will certainly not be activist, as, to me, it has a very bad co-notation. (Laura)

Some other interviewees referred to sport, socializing or cultural activities. This was the case of Aleksandra and Emilia. The latter said:

> No, not really [laughter]. Okay, I have a kind of subscription … to use some sport equipment in the sport center, but it's not like a club, so it's just private use, with friends, but without any kind of organized guidance or anything like that, so no I don't think I'm involved in any clubs or associations, no. … I don't know, what can be understood as social activities? Can it be going out or going to cinema, to some concerts from time to time, yes, so these are the things, of course some activities for kids that is also something we try to follow. (Emilia)

Beniamin simply described his social activities, referring to eating out or visits of friends:

> Yes. So I try to meet my friends and colleagues after work. This involves going to different clubs, restaurants, meeting in the park, going out for Saturday – Sunday to Ardens … I'm not a member of any club or an organization, but I do go to a gym where I also have a few Polish colleagues. We go to discos sometimes, usual things, you know lunches, I visit them at home, we eat together. (Beniamin)

Other interviewees bluntly denied being involved in any organised activity (e.g., Patrycja, Otylia). Yet some others justified their lack of engagement with the fact that they had small children: "No. I work full time plus I have two very small kids at home, so I'm very busy with that" (Dominika); "No, not for the moment [laughter and pointing at a baby]. For the moment this is my biggest social event, so no, nothing like that" (Ula).

In general, the Polish EU officials I interviewed do not seem to be particularly involved in the associative life. Only a few of them are members of any club or association and those are often sport clubs or other hobby-based associations, often linked to the EU institutions. Only a minority is involved in charity or political activity.

4.3.1.7. Attachment to Brussels: what if the EU institutions moved to another city?

After the discussion on their establishment and functioning in the city, I tried to find out whether the Polish EU officials have developed a strong emotional link with the city, or if they were merely attached to the EU institutions community in which they spent most of their time.

One of the interview questions assumed that the institutions, together with all their employees and the expats dealing with EU matters would move to another place, such as Paris, Prague or Canary Islands.

Several persons admitted that in case the EU institutions moved to another city, they would miss Brussels or they would be otherwise unhappy about this fact. This concerned both some persons who had come to Brussels for a job related reasons and some of those who had already lived in Brussels before they started to work in the EU institutions. The latter is notably the case of Otylia, who said:

> Certainly, but it would be different this time, as if you are dislocated once, then it is easier to go through it again, however, now, my life is already fully arranged here and it would be a problem. (Otylia)

Emilia admitted she would miss Belgium, as she appreciated certain aspects of life in this city. However, she would be ready to move out, especially that there were also many things she did not like in Belgium.

On the other hand, for Maksymilian, staying in Brussels would rather be a question of convenience:

> Well, I don't know how it would be like in this new place, but as I said I would definitely be very unhappy about the fact that I have to change my life again and do the job, let's say, not really adaptation, but let's say, again try to make friends and come to know places and develop … the habits which I need to feel safe. So, from this point of view, I would be definitely quite upset about it, but it's not because I'm emotionally very strongly attached to Brussels. (Maksymilian)

Numerous interviewees, on the contrary, showed unconditional enthusiasm to the idea. Again, in this group there were persons who had lived in Brussels for quite a long time. Laura's testimony bares resentment towards the city and its inhabitants. She vividly exclaimed with laughter: "I dream about it!" Further interrogated on whether she would not miss Brussels, she said:

> Absolutely not! Absolutely not! I am even telling this to the Belgian people that I am dreaming about it, [about] being transferred elsewhere, because they do not deserve us, I am being so nasty with them and really ... if only they warn me about it in advance, so as to sell the flat before the price goes down [laughter].
> Now I laugh, you know, I talk a lot with my colleagues who did not understand me at the beginning, they used to say that I am a bit nuts, as I told them such things, I guess this is shocking when you hear such things right after the arrival, as everybody is so innocent, I was also innocent when I arrived here, I regret this time very much and they, after years, they admit: "at the beginning we thought you were a bit crazy, and that, in general, something's wrong with you, but everything happened as you said". I respond: "Fortune teller, fortune teller [I am]" [laughter]. And you know, these people, after five or seven years, not only confirmed I was right, but even started to adopt attitudes very similar to mine, as I spoke with colleagues who were very prone to compromise, tried not to stand out and to do things through compromises, now said: "if you do not stand up against, you have nothing". I said: "didn't I tell you?" Well, you know, there is satisfaction somewhere, not that it is so, as I wish it was not, but that you know and you arrived to a right conclusion, so it is not that bad with me and I still have social skills [laughter]. (Laura)

Another long-term inhabitant of Brussels, Maja, said she would not mind leaving Brussels, although she had happened to miss Belgium in the past:

> I have already missed Belgium, when I was detached to work in Italy. Even though I liked it very much, but it is there where I realised that some of my roots stayed in Brussels. But after I had come back from Italy, I wanted to go back there [laughter], and as I did not manage, at least did I find a husband [laughter]. So, no, I do not think it would bother me, as I am so open and it does not bother me when I have to adapt. On the contrary: this is a challenge and an experience. (Maja)

Also those who had settled in Brussels relatively recently expressed their dissatisfaction with their life in Brussels. Klara said:

> No, no [I wouldn't miss Belgium], not at all, not at all ... [laughter], for me, the Canary Islands, yes please. No, I would not miss Belgium. In Belgium, we adapted to the

> environment, but we are not so delighted with our life here so as to make it sad for us to leave. (Klara)

Also Beniamin's reaction suggested that living in Brussels must have been challenging for him: "God, yes, please! … I could live in another country".

Some respondents claiming that they would not mind the Commission moving to another city made it clear that the attractiveness of Brussels lied precisely in its international, pluricultural character that would disappear together with the institutions:

> If the weather is nicer [laughter], I must say, that could be a good idea. … I think I would miss the international atmosphere, but then, if the whole Commission and all the institutions move there, then the international atmosphere will also move, so I don't know, but I think … there are a lot of things in the city that I like, but still the weather and some stuff are still quite annoying, so if we could move to some place, like … maybe Spain or Prague, yeah, a very nice city, I wouldn't mind [laughter]. (Zofia)

> Because, to a large extent Brussels … revolves around the Commission expats, international community. If that all is gone, there is very little left, let's be honest. Those buildings will be vacant and there will be no one in this bar, so staying here would miss the point. (Bernard)

> Because I assume that all this environment, as well, not only buildings. The institutions are mostly people, officials, employees, and they would all move together with the institutions. Buildings and the city are actually without importance if the circle of your friends is among the EU officials. If we all move, your acquaintances, friends, all move. (Darek)

The opinions quoted above tell much about the attitude of certain Polish EU officials to Brussels. Indeed, for them, Brussels stands for the institutions and their expatriate friends. If the instiutions moved, everything would move, so the situation would remain almost the same. If, indeed, the Polish EU officials community exists, as certain responses to previous questions would suggest, this community is deterritorialised, it could be transplanted elsewhere without losing its character.

Some respondents referred also to the idea of a new challenge which moving to another city would bring about. Adrian confirmed his readiness to leave, in the following words:

> It would be an interesting challenge; I could certainly cope with it. If there was such a decision ... I think this is not very realistic, but if it was, for sure ... I have not come here, to Belgium, to be in Belgium, right? I've come here, as the EU institutions are here. If it was another country, I would probably go, although, by now I have also started to identify myself with Belgium in some way, for sure. But for sure, it would not be a problem to move. …

> Probably, I would [miss Brussels]. I can tell, as when I come back here from somewhere, I don't feel estranged. And also on the basis of the [experience of] friends who had left Belgium and are very nostalgic and miss the city. (Adrian)

Darek had a similar point of view:

> I think I would be even glad: a new, different city, different local people, different things to see and different connections with other cities. Something would change. I think I would even want such a change. (Darek)

4.3.1.8. Brussels: the city of expats?

Thus, although the previous questions made me think that at least some of my interviewees are integrated within the city, as Favell (2001a, 2008a) wanted it, this kind of integration does not necessarily imply attachment. But, if the Polish EU officials care only about the EU institutions world and the "satellite" expat crowd, perhaps they would prefer to eliminate completely the "genuine", national character of the place they live? The following question confronted my interviewees with the eventuality of living in an "expat city", without genuinely local population.

Not surprisingly, all of my interviewees responded with horror to the suggestion that they might want to live in a city inhabited by expats only. The question was supposed to make them reveal, in the context of the response to the question, their attitude to the mixity, to their colleagues and the local people, as well as their perception of Brussels and their way of integration into the city.

A large number of interviewees observed that their life in Brussels already resembles a lot life in a city of Eurocrats. Bernard remarked that "this is the case here already", Adrian admitted: "but I feel here a bit as if Brussels was a city like that". Klara said:

> Actually, Brussels is a place like that in certain districts … but luckily ... it is still governed by the Belgian State … and I wouldn't like to live in a place governed by the Eurocrats. (Klara)

I asked the interviewees to give reasons for their answers. Those presented certain common features. Some of them pointed, paradoxically, at the lack of diversity, as such, as a serious impediment. Emilia believed that:

> It's a great value to have a proper mixture of people and people with completely different perspectives and experience and just to have a chance to see things from the other angle. (Emilia)

Maksymilian further developed a similar statement:

> You need a certain variety, I mean, I rather tend to avoid colleagues in my private life. I mean, I think we spent sufficient time together at work and I think it would be quite impoverishing to limit my social contacts to people who … are in the same situation as I am. I mean, I think it's quite enriching to meet people from different cultures and different professions and with different experiences and with different life stories and … I mean, living in the city with only Eurocrats would be like, living, spending the whole day in my Commission building. (Maksymilian)

Ksawery added:

> I also appreciate very much some kind of mixture of origins and nationalities that coexist in Brussels and create this unique atmosphere and environment. (Ksawery)

Many interviewees thought that living in such a city would be impoverishing. Dominika said:

> There is local culture everywhere you go and it's a pity not knowing it. And it's so rich to try different food, different music, different books and different ideas. (Dominika)

For Klara, "this would be a place sterilised of everything", Filip feared that "that would be the narrowing down of [one's] cultural life". As he continued: "The city with only expats has no roots and usually becomes degenerate, like Nowa Huta".[178] Darek compared such an expat place to a "ghetto".

Therefore, the city inhabited exclusively by the EU officials of 28 different nationalities, as well as by other expats would lack diversity, because their professional situation and the perception of the world would be the same. It is striking that my interviewees perceived EU officials of different nationalities as belonging to the same "tribe". For them, they were colleagues, fellow Eurocrats, rather than Spaniards, Frenchmen or

[178] A socialist "perfect city" built near Cracow in the Stalinist period, it was conceived as home for workers of the newly constructed giant steelworks; its population, consisting of uprooted, usually uneducated migrants from different parts of the country, quickly degenerated and fell prey of alcoholism and different "social evils".

Slovaks, they were perceived as having more in common with each other than with any other category of Europeans.

Some others emphasized the importance of the presence of a dominant culture. Bernard put it explicitly:

> It would be without any predominate culture, and maybe that would be interesting, that there would be nothing to discover. Apart of it, an interesting aspect is just to get to know a different culture, but there has to be one. (Bernard)

He also stated that it is too early for the emergence of "a genuine European culture". Similarly, Adrian said: "it would be very artificial. There must be a group who feels some attachment". Aleksandra and Ula admitted that they felt better surrounded by a dominant host community having "an element of a national life around" or seeing "something else, like real Belgium". Ula added:

> People complain they never know real Belgians, which is true … So, it's better that we still live in normal … environment not only with expats and with other Commission workers (Ula)

Other interviewees described a situation of a "city of expats" as artificial.

My respondents often used the question as an opportunity to elaborate on their life in Brussels and their adaptation strategies. Maja explained:

> Because, as I said, my experience with expats …, except for those persons that I know through private contacts, through my husband, are very lukewarm, if I can say. And if this is transmitted to neighbour relations in a block of flats, so if you have neighbours who are like that, so lukewarm … (Maja)

Darek admitted, that to the extent possible, he was "trying to meet people from outside this environment". He added:

> While buying a flat, I chose a place with no EU officials. My neighbour, for instance, is an old Belgian attorney, with a long family tradition, on the street there are also foreigners from Morocco and, on the other side, there is a house full of Africans. (Darek)

Zofia said:

> I like to have some friends from work in my life also that I really appreciate and enjoy spending time with them, but I didn't even want to live in Woluwe, you know, or Uccle, because ... the percentage of expats and EU officials was too high for me, ad here in Jette I feel quite well, you know, more in a normal life of local people. (Zofia)

4.3.1.9. Place of "belonging"

Having learnt that the Polish EU officials I interviewed felt fairly adapted in their environment and even "integrated in the city" (Favell 2001a), although not very much attached to it, I asked them where they felt they belonged: in other terms, with which place (if any) they felt, after several years in Brussels, the strongest link.

Five out of 21 interviewees said they belonged here, in Brussels, although many of them referred also to places where they had been brought up or studied. Maja succinctly replied: "Brussels certainly, and also Lublin, my home town. And Poland as well". Laura originally answered "nowhere". However, she corrected herself:

> I mean, actually Brussels, as I've lived here my whole life, as, you know, I have a complicated biography in Poland, I didn't live anywhere, I can't tell where I am from when someone asks, I am from nowhere in Poland. (Laura)

Adrian referred to the parallel processes of adaptation in Brussels and progressive alienation of his own town (Warsaw):

> I think I started to identify myself with Brussels. I started my eighth year in Brussels. Okay, Warsaw is my city, I was born there, I studied there, it will always be my city. However, as I do not have regular contact [with Warsaw], I walk in the street and I go to my favourite place which does not exist anymore – there is a bank there – and I do not know these streets and it is somehow difficult to explore Warsaw. Brussels is smaller, so it is easier to get a grip on and as I spend more time here, I think I identify myself with Brussels. (Adrian)

Also Darek explained in detail his choice:

> Whenever I come back from a trip, a longer stay outside Brussels, when I come back, I'd say that I'm coming home, that I am at home and at present, I identify myself mostly with Brussels. (Darek)

Only two persons quoted their hometown as the place they felt they belonged to. Dominika had no doubts about it:

> Of course a region. I'm coming from Poznań, so it's [the region of] Greater Poland that is most important place to me. (Dominika)

Also Sebastian simply answered: "Warsaw". Some other interviewees, although they did not designate their hometown as the primary place of belonging, attached nevertheless much

importance to the place they originated in, or to their native region. This was the case of Stanislaw, who said:

> I was born in [a city in the Mazovian region]. Even right now, on my car I have an emblem of my city. I'm reading the local newspaper, okay, it's also due to the fact that I was once running there in elections, but I like my region. I would like to serve to my region in the future, maybe as an MP … . I was studying in Mazowsze. … So, I feel Polish, definitely. European, Polish, born in a Mazovian city, raised in Warsaw culture, with a great influence of United States – I've been [there] three times for three months - Chicago area. (Stanislaw)

A few persons indicated that they did not really have the feeling they belonged to any place. Beniamin said jokingly: "frankly, I don't think I belong anywhere. I just exist in one of the many out of millions universes". Maksymilian elaborated a bit more on his attitude to places where he lived, suggesting that he did not really "belong" to any places, although he could be nostalgic for settings and situations:

> I'm getting used to places, and certain settings very easily, but having said that, I mean, it is more a question of convenience than strong emotional ties … If I have to, tomorrow, go to New York, or Warsaw, or any other place, I would probably find it quite inconvenient, I mean to adapt to a new reality and … to recreate my little universe around me, but I will not, like, cry the whole night, so I mean, this is just to say that, whether I belong here, or whether I belong there, … I wouldn't formulate it like that, but now I feel at home here, that's for sure. I definitely do not think that my home is in Poland and here I'm only on a temporary basis and wherever I am, my home is in Warsaw, the Jelonki district, where I've grown up, … I'm definitely nostalgic for my childhood as, I suppose, many people are, but I'm not nostalgic for this type of places, like Poland, or anywhere else. (Maksymilain)

Some other respondents who gave broadly similar answers, were rather vague while determining their place of attachment. It is characteristic that these persons referred to the concept of Europeanness to explain the reasons for hesitation:

> I think I'm in the middle of adaptation, so, it's easier and easier for me in everyday life. But there are still many issues that I still don't know, because I was not yet at the stage of looking for school for children or childcare - about these I have no idea. While in Poland I would know it immediately, because we just know so many local people who use it, so you just know it, and here it's not like that, it's just that I would have to look for that information. … I would absolutely not identify myself as connected with Belgium. I treat this place as a place where I work, so I would say that I'm more European living in Belgium. European - Polish living in Belgium. (Patrycja)

> That is a good question because we are more Europeans than nationals, but I think I'm both. I'm first of all national because I feel national and I speak the language and I associate myself with a certain culture, which is Poland, but on the other hand I'm very much fond of European Integration in the large sense, and that makes me a bit European also, so I think it's both, that I'm European and national in the same time. (Ksawery)

> I don't know at all. I cannot say I'm, you know, from Brussels, Bruxelloise, I don't think so at all [laughter]. I'm not Belgian at all … I think I have this European identity, you know, that okay, I'm from Poland, but I lived in France most of my adult life I must say and now I've lived here for a few years and maybe tomorrow I could live somewhere else. (Zofia)

Most of the interviewees said the place where they belonged was still Poland. Sometimes, they also had secondary places of attachment, like Aleksandra, who spent some time in the United Kingdom:

> I think it still depends on the period of my life, I mean in general and by origins I identify with Poland and the town that I come from and that doesn't change. I feel some closeness and familiarity with the UK because I've spent quite a number of years there. But I don't quite associate myself with Belgium so much. (Aleksandra)

Similar reflection was shared by Otylia who has lived in Belgium for quite a long time and had a daughter issued from a nationally mixed marriage:

> I am a Pole. I am definitely a Pole, although I am impregnated with Belgitude and now also with multiculturalism, so actually, I feel European. And certainly, I've brought up a European – my daughter. (Otylia)

These multiple attachments were also shared by Klara and Kamil:

> Ooff, I guess [I belong] in Poland [laughter], definitely. No, I mean, I feel now at home in Poland, in Greece and in Belgium. To a different degree. But I belong in Poland, definitely. (Klara)

> In the first I think it's Poland, Polish then. Then, I think European, because I work in the EU institutions. Then, my region, so - lubuskie . Then, Brussels. (Kamil)

4.3.2. Daily life

Having heard about the impressions, attitudes and convictions that the research partcipants had with regard to Brussels and their possible adaptation or integration, it might be interesting to see if there are any "objective" indicators of these attitudes or processes in their daily life.

4.3.2.1. Change of lifestyle after arrival in Brussels?

Berry defines acculturation as "a dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members" (2005:698). As the scholar elaborates, in addition to changes in social structures, cultural practices and institutions of a group, acculturation involves changes in an individual's behaviours (Berry 2005:698-699). These changes may concern the way people speak, dressing and eating habits or one's cultural identity (Berry et al. 2002:352). With this in mind, I asked the research participants whether their lifestyle had changed significantly since they came to Belgium, hoping to obtain a hint on whether and to what extent their daily routine has been impacted by the new place of living and the surrounding other cultures.

Twelve out of 28 respondents (from the new research group) who gave an answer to this question found that their life had not changed significantly since they had come to Brussels. Some of them referred to changes in their lifestyle that they did not, nevertheless, found important or significant. One of them mentioned "new job, new flat, distance from the family, new friends", but qualified these changes as superficial. Another male respondent said: "Not really… maybe except that I can afford more than when I lived in Poland". One of the women referred to the fact that she "eats out more often and became more interested in good food", but also considered that her lifestyle had not changed "significantly". On the other hand, other research participants considered that their life has changed to a certain extent, precisely because of: "a much higher salary than in Poland"; or as yet another one put it:

> because moving to Belgium largely coincided with a significant upward change in my income and job stability. Compared with my life in Poland (a university lecturer making ends meet by doing a lot of freelance work in evenings), I have much more free time for quality activities with the family, and a significantly higher income (which means e.g., being able to afford quality food, restaurant outings, a larger home, etc.). The fact of having two young children since moving to Belgium has also affected my lifestyle significantly – there is less time for more traditionally young leisure activities (especially social nights out) and more time is devoted to children at home.

For some respondents the arrival to Brussels coincided with events which are not specifically related to the city or to the European institutions, such as birth of children or the beginning of their professional life: "It did change, but mainly due to the fact that my two children were born"; "A lot – I have a baby now and it is impossible to spend all weekends in the mountains or bike as much as in e.g., Germany"; "Basically I stopped being a student, and started a professional life"; "It is very difficult to say because before coming to Belgium I was a student and here I did a *stage* and started my professional life – and this was the biggest change in my lifestyle. I think it would have happened in a similar way had I been in another place too".

For some other Polish EU officials, the arrival to Brussels stood for a slower pace of life: "It got more lazy, the job is not so difficult, not stressful I have time for hanging around with friends, I go out a lot, speak with people, drink more alcohol than before. I don't worry about the money, future, "Eurocrat" life is very comfortable"; "Yes, I have much more free time and earn enough to live well".

Changes described by these respondents could not be analysed as related to acculturation, they might and probably would occur also if they had moved to another city in Poland or if they had simply changed the job or increased their monthly income.

A few persons who gave an affirmative answer referred to aspects reflecting, to some extent, the local eating habits as important aspects of his lifestyle which had changed:

> To some extent yes. I eat Belgian food (*moules*; *frites*) ;-) I spend more time in restaurants;

> I slowed down. Before, I used to work hard and travel frequently to far-away places. Here, my job is less demanding and stable. I can spend more time on out-of-work activities, which is great. Belgium has a large Polish 'expat' community and good access to culture related to Poland which I take advantage of. This was not the case with my previous assignments (New York, Montreal, Berlin, Mexico, etc.).

Subsequently, I inquired about the way they spent their free time – firstly, I asked whether they frequented predominantly "expat" places or rather places popular among the

local (Belgian) population, in order to find out to what extent they stuck to the "expat community".

4.3.2.2. Spare time: "expat" spaces or Belgian spaces?

According to various authors, the separation of skilled mobile professionals from the local population, partly due to their working patterns, allegedly extends to their spare time. Expatriates would remain "scotched" to certain circuits, including work, home and expatriate places (see e.g., Vertovec and Cohen 2002:7). This would make part of a conscious process of establishing boundaries by expatriates themselves (see Fechter 2007a:63).

During the interviews, I asked the research participants about places where they tend to spend their time, to find out whether, indeed, they maintained physical and social boundaries separating them from the host population. The answers to this question revealed that the lifestyles of my interviewees varied significantly. Relatively few of them admitted that they frequented mainly places popular among other EU officials and "expats". Only one of them - Adrian - clearly regretted not reaching outside "the bubble": "Unfortunately – unfortunately, I insist – among "expats". Rather seldom do I go to typically Belgian places. When I meet people, these are most often non-Belgians". Patrycja, by contrast, admitted she had preference for "expat" places and "expat" life:

> Mostly "expat" oriented, because I don't have Belgian friends, so I don't know where Belgians go out, but those places that I know that they are maybe typical Belgian bars, I don't like them, so I don't even try to go there. So, these are usually events organized either by Polish community, like Polish Embassy or by people working in the institutions or around. (Patrycja)

Beniamin, although he said he went also to Belgian restaurants, he was not really sure (and did not seem to care) whether there were actually any Belgians frequenting these places:

> I can tell you precisely where I go. So, I go to "Piola Libri", I go to "Amigos de Aragon", "Casa Miguel", so I think these are the places which are not really Polish oriented, these are not Polish clubs, so these are Spanish, Italian, Belgian restaurants. But there are many Polish people there. (Beniamin)

Klara explained the fact of going mainly to "expat places" by the fact that she lived in a district where "expats" were overrepresented:

> I think so, [I think] ... that some of these places are popular rather among "expats" and this is also because of its territorial location, as ... we live in Kraainem and, in general, Kraainem, Woluwe-St.-Lambert, these are quarters which are very much populated by the Eurocrats, so, by the nature of things, when you frequent any place there, they are actually all frequented by the Eurocrats. (Klara)

The other interviewees who frequented mainly "expat places" explained this phenomenon by different lifestyles and different financial capacities of the local population. Sebastian referred to his sport activities where he seemingly met both Belgians and "expats". Then he explained:

> This is very simple, right, this is a city of "expats" and Belgians live different lives, right, which you don't know … I guess, when you are settled, you just stay where you are, where your place is; basically at home, especially when you have kids. "Expats" quite often are without kids and even if they have kids … their very kind of inner world is quite limited, so they have this need of going out, which Belgians do not feel because they are at home. (Sebastian)

Bernard said:

> I go to restaurants, that's true, but I think that they are open to everybody, but I think that disproportionally there is a lot of "expats" because simply they can afford … Belgians do not go out that much. (Bernard)

Interestingly, the interviewees quoted above believed that the lack of contact with the Belgian population of Brussels was due to fundamentally different lifestyle of the latter, while Bernard and Maja (quoted below) seemed to believe in the stereotypical opinion on enormous gap between the earnings of EU officials and average Belgians. According to this logic, entertainment places like bars or restaurants are places for expats, not for the poorer and family-oriented local people. This somewhat surprising conviction recalls the situation of young, single Western expats in a Third World country, as described by Fechter (2007a, 2007b). In case of these interviewees, their alienation from the Belgian part of the city must have been complete, as they did not even notice their presence.

Those Polish EU officials who frequented the same places as the Belgians were far more numerous. Some of them simply stated the fact, without mentioning their preferences or integrative enthusiasm. Kamil noticed:

> I mean, the basketball I play, there are sometimes regular Belgians who attend, and other things, I mean, besides those meetings with Polish network in this bar, I mean, besides that, I think it's quite open … But there are sometimes some activities which are for example sent through our mailing list and mainly attended by the Polish community or by "expats". But I cannot say that I'm more, let's say, inclined towards those events. (Kamil)

For Emilia, the social activities were determined by the activities of her children, what placed her on the "Belgian" side:

> I think [these places are attended] also [by] Belgians. I think they're not typically ["expat" oriented] … Okay, if there is an invitation ... linked to the institutions, then okay, it might be different. Then it's mainly "expats" there, but as regards some kids activities or some other events that are happening in Belgium, they're open to everybody, so I consider them as also typical, yeah, open for Belgians as well. (Emilia)

Another group of my interviewees seemed to deliberately share their activities between "expats" and Belgians. This is clearly the case of Ksawery:

> I try to do both, so I'm not refraining from getting together with the "expat" community in Brussels, but on the other hand, I always keep in mind that it's another culture, another country and to understand it better I need to interact with those people and I try to do it. It's not only with the Belgians, but also with the international community that is well developed in Brussels and in the Brussels area. (Ksawery)

For Maja, the "expat world" represented the friends of her (Italian) husband, while she connected the "Belgian world" to friends and acquaintances she had met before she started to work in the institutions:

> With my friends from the old times, we often go to places where we went before, so, rather, to places where either the Belgians go or people who are like Belgians, who do not work in the institutions, while with acquaintances from, say, the Commission circles - meaning more international, who have more money, as this, let's be frank, this is also a criterion, perhaps we go to other, trendier places, although not too much trendy. As far as I am concerned, this is not my style. (Maja)

Finally, Otylia, who has also lived in Brussels for quite a long time, showed curiosity for Polish places, despite being accustomed to mainly Belgian-frequented spaces:

> [I attend] Belgian [spaces], although I do not avoid and like discovering Polish places in Brussels. For instance, for my birthday, my daughter invited me to a Polish restaurant in Brussels, knowing that it will be a pleasure for me. Besides, my intimate circle likes Poland

> and Polishness, so thanks to this, from time to time we go to such places, but this is not a condition or a great need. (Otylia)

Darek visited places popular both amongst the Belgians and the "expats", while additionally he attended Polish meetings:

> I rather do not go to such places, want of time, and when I do go out, I usually go to such places as Café Belga on Place Flagey, where I was, perhaps, twice during the last three years and I have the impression that there is a mixed environment there, Belgian and foreign. Then, from time to time, I go to Polish meetings, once a month, [I go there] more and more rarely, but I still try to go there from time to time and the environment there is purely Polish, although there are less and less persons working in the EU institutions. I think this is related to the fact that the organizer has changed and has a broader circle of acquaintances – also outside the EU. (Darek)

Filip, similarly as Klara, explained his choices by the characteristics of the place he lived in. However, unlike Klara, he went both to "expat" and Belgian places.

Certain Polish EU officials I interviewed were very critical of "expat places". Laura explained that, as she had also lived in Brussels for a long time and the language was not a barrier for her, the presence or absence of "expats" was not a criterion either. However, she also found it impoverishing to mingle predominantly with "expats":

> No, I do not go ... as I have no language problems, so I do not need to go where they necessarily speak English and I am trying not to lock myself in a certain environment, as I believe that this is very impoverishing, if you always speak about the same things. Besides, I believe that many of these "expats" are detached from the daily life, as they maintain contacts exclusively within the same environment. I was here before and thus, thanks to this, I have wider contacts. (Laura)

Maksymilian seemed to have a similar opinion, although he had come to Brussels much later, together with other EU officials:

> I have the impression that most of the places, most of the bars I frequent are quite popular amongst the local population, yes. I hate typical "expats" oriented places like Place Luxembourg, I mean, I went there a couple of times in the very beginning of my stay in Brussels, and I found this place absolutely horrible, I mean, terribly boring, the kind of topics which are discussed there. … Well, it's very much work related, or "expat" life related, but in a very superficial manner, and this is precisely the impression I had: that typical conversations on Place Luxembourg are extremely superficial. It makes me think of, when I was ERASMUS student in France, at the beginning when you meet people, I mean you practice this ritual small talk which is very superficial, and very boring, but you have to do it in order to, I mean, come to know people, I mean, develop any relationships with them afterwards, but I have the impression that at Place Luxembourg, … you stay at this level forever, I mean, I have a headache when I think of it. (Maksymilian)

Another person who did not like "expats"- oriented places was Zofia, although for her, the main factor determining her frequentations was the area in which she lived, which was not very popular amongst the "expats":

> Well, sometimes I would go just here close by, like to this place or just to have a drink with my husband somewhere in the evening, or we'd go to a Thai restaurant that is close by, because we live here, so we just walk somewhere, that's easy, or we go to visit Atomium also. When we're in this area, sometimes we would go there just for a drink or to eat something there. So, I don't think it is really "expats"- oriented, because it's not an "expat" area at all. And sometimes when we go out to friends, it would rather be in the centre of Brussels, so, I think it's for everybody. I've been once to an "expat" club and I didn't like it at all. It is called ALOFT, or something. (Zofia)

To sum up, the frequentations of the Polish EU officials interviewed do not comply with the findings of other scholars (see e.g., Fechter 2007a, 2007b) researching on expats, often in culturally and socially different settings (like e.g., Indonesia). Most of the interviewees claim not to be physically locked in the "expat bubble", going to places frequented also by the Belgian people. Very few secluded themselves intentionally. Those who visited mostly "expat" places explained it rather by geographical proximity and settlement patterns of the areas they lived in, sometimes also by the difference of lifestyles. Among those who frequented the same places as Belgians, some interviewees expressed their lack of preference for typical "expat" places, but they were hardly ever motivated by the perspective of integration.

This behaviour seems to fit the overall strategy of the Polish EU officials towards the local population. They do not seclude themselves intentionally and are often fond of the presence of Belgians or other minorities. These different cultures are a "nice" second plan. However, my respondents usually make no active effort to enter into any closer contact with them.

4.3.2.3. Attending EU restricted social events

Previous research on EU officials showed that, although networking outside the working hours was characterised by different patterns than networking at work, the EU played an important role in the spare time activities. EU related events are, by their very nature, excellent occasions for networking and lobbying, they are the interzone between the professional and leisure activities. These were the conclusions of Shore and Black (1994), Suvarierol (2009), Bellier (2000b) and Abélès et al. (1993) – all of them "heavy weights" of the EU officials research, drawn on the basis of "old member states" and mostly "pre-Kinnock"[179] officials.

To my surprise, only five out of 29 respondents who answered the question indicated that they participated in events restricted for the EU officials once per month or more frequently.

The remaining respondents usually answered "sometimes" (occasionally specifying that it stood for one-three times per year), "rarely" or "never". One person declared taking part in such events once per two months.

A few respondents developed their answers, usually giving reasons for their sporadic participation: "I go to these events very rarely, generally only when I have to. I think this 'ghettoisation' of the EU community, and organizing events strictly restricted 'so one might feel better than the others' is completely counterproductive, and creates animosities towards the Belgian society"; "Not really ... too much propaganda there"; "Overall no. The only exception I can think is the internal Directorate-General Christmas parties once a year, which are limited just to the employees of a particular DG".

[179] The so-called Kinnock reform was a reform of the Staff Regulation entered into force in 2004, reducing certain rights and privileges and re-structuring the EU civil service. All EU officials from new member states are, obviously, "post-Kinnock" officials.

Overall, most of my respondents claim not to go to events restricted to the EU officials. Some of them avoid such events purposefully, sometimes by reluctance to a seclusive and ideological character of these meetings. The difference as compared to the patterns identified by my predecessors could be attributable to the fact that, as Bellier (2002) claims, old officials having started in 1970s and before, were more idealistic and convicted Europeans, but it could also be related to specific associations with such semi-official events in the post-communist Europe, related to suspiciousness towards any form of official entertainment, automatically associated with institutional propaganda. Finally, it could also be interpreted as showing limited interest in intensive socialising with other EU officials.

4.3.2.4. Belgian public celebrations

During my previous research, I asked my respondents about their participation in Belgian public celebrations, like for instance Carnival or *Ommegang*. What I meant with this question was participation in celebrations massively frequented by Belgians, rather than originating in Belgian culture. I assumed that repeated participation in such events would be a symptom of determination to discover the local culture, but also to get closer to the host population. In that time, however, around half of the respondents answered they had never participated in such celebrations, while the majority of the rest had done it only occasionally (Rozanska 2009).

The results of the present research, with regard to the "new group", showed even less involvement in the local public life as only slightly less than one third of respondents (nine persons) admitted attending them (including two men who were doing it only occasionally). Twenty-one persons said they did not take part in any Belgian celebrations (one man said he was doing it rarely, the other said he was doing it only "occasionally but too rarely to say 'usually'"). One of the women explained: "I have not done so far much – but it was not 'on

purpose', so I might very well participate in one of the events in the future."

4.3.3. Social life

Social networks "of kinship and friendship" play a crucial role both during migration and adaptation in a new society by "provid[ing] social capital" (Brettell 2008:125; see also Janeta 2011; Favell 2003b; Field 2003:1). Favell notably points out that organized migrant networks offer social support facilitating mobility (2003b:417). As he argues, this kind of extensive networks of "expat or international community connections" exist in each city and their functioning is sustained with the help of "magazines, websites and services designed to facilitate these movers' lifestyles and needs" (Favell 2003b:417; see also Cailliez 2004; Gatti 2009; Fechter 2007b).

4.3.3.1. Working overtime?

I started with the question on how much they worked. Integration into any community requires a minimal amount of time to devote to social activities. One of the imaginaries concerning EU officials (but also other expatriates) refers to the vision of people working long hours in glass and concrete buildings in the European (or business) district, separated from the rest of the city by physical boundaries (see e.g., Shore 2000:162). During the interviews, I inquired the research participants about the time they usually spend at work. The purpose of this question was twofold: in addition to the already mentioned inquiry about their actual possibility to establish any links with the local people or participate in the local cultural activities, I wanted to understand the attitude of my interviewees to the job. Are they driven by their dedication to the European cause? Do they hope to make a career or act out of their personal interest or professional ethics? As the EU officials community was built around the work, I found these questions very relevant. To this effect, I added a comment: "As far as

I know there is no extra pay, and number of extra hours you can recover is limited, so why are you staying?"

Almost half of my interviewees claimed that they never (or almost never) did extra hours. Those who worked under the "flexitime" scheme (permitting to recover the hours overworked), scrupulously recovered the extra working time. This is the case of Bernard, who said: "Oh, I don't work beyond what I can recover, that's for sure. I try to do my job as well as possible within the reasonable limits". The working patterns varied in this group: some interviewees declared that they came earlier in order to leave earlier:

> So, I try not to stay too long, because then I really don't have much time to spend with my kids, which I don't like. So, I try to come to work a bit earlier and also then be able to leave a bit earlier. It's not always easy because there is always a lot of things to do. … [W]hen I see that I have to leave even if I will have some things for tomorrow, I do it and if there is something urgent then I can stay ... But it's not that I work very late. I try to leave work, I don't know, at 5:40 p.m. or 5:30 p.m. and then to be at home before 6:00 p.m. (Emilia).

Some others, on the contrary, come late and leave later, like Kamil:

> It happens [that I work overtime]. I like what I do, but the reason why I stay rather over time is basically a lot of work. A lot of work and I start quite late - 9:20 a.m. let's say, 9:30 a.m., so if I've started at 8 a.m., then probably I would finish at 5:30 p.m., that's it … I usually stay until 6:30 p.m., so a lot of work plus, as I've said, late start in the morning. (Kamil)

Many interviewees of this group had little children, which affected their working patterns. For example, Klara said:

> I do not work extra hours at all, because while driving my children to school and back home, I simply cannot, that is why I do work standard time. If I have to stay longer, if it happens from time to time that I really need to do something, then I stay. (Klara)

Similarly, children needed to be taken into account by Emilia quoted above, and Dominika:

> I don't do a lot of extra working hours, to say the truth ... If it happens, … at least here I have the luxury of being able to put my hours aside, then if I need sometimes a day off, I can use those extra hours from that. ... I try to stick to normal working hours because I have small kids, so I have to bring them from the *crèche* on time. (Dominika)

For Otylia, there was no conjunction between her personal interests and the job. This is how she explained that she never worked overtime, although she underlined that she respected the working time and was involved in correct discharge of her tasks:

> First of all, I am not in a political department, so what I do, I rather do it for those who work for Europe, but no, I do not have such penchants ... It's a job which ... is absolutely not in the field of my interest, as I am, as you may remember, biologist. However, as I always try to do well what I do, I am devoted to it and I respect the working time, although it is quite flexible. Nobody is supervising me, my job simply needs to be done and nobody will do it for me. ... but no, I do not do extra hours and I do not intend to. (Otylia)

Some of the interviewees recalled having worked more in the past: before they had children or at the beginning of their career, when they simply needed to work more. Maja recalls:

> I mean, we do not even have this system where you can recover hours, as our boss considers that we are responsible, quality officials and we have to have the job done, sometimes it takes more, sometimes less time. When I did not have a baby, I worked, probably, slightly above the limit, perhaps from 9:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., for instance. Fridays even more often, as the evening extends to Saturday, but only sometimes, because I was overloaded with work, or, rather, because it was more convenient for me to work like that. But now, since I have a baby, I am somehow limited and, I guess, I work within the normal limit. (Maja)

For Darek, the reason for longer working hours was the accumulated backlog of work related to the time before his appointment:

> Well, I do not count the working time, I start at 9:45 a.m., around 12:30 p.m. I have a lunch break, most often around two hours or somewhat less. Sometimes, it happens to be two hours and a half, if I need to do something in town. That's how I work until 6:30 p.m. or even more, if necessary.
> I never leave before 6:30 p.m., but, as I said at the beginning, I do not count the working time, if something needs to be done, then I stay until 8:00 p.m. It happened to me a few times to go to work on Saturday, and I worked, and I did not count. And at the very beginning, of course, I have worked longer, as there was nobody on my place for half a year before I came and the whole material needed to be processed. I remember that, at the beginning, I even stayed until midnight or longer, as I was at the office with a colleague, who had a lot of work and I would have felt uneasy to leave, so we worked together. (Darek)

Finally, Filip had to stay longer in the previous job in the institutions. He considered the change as an improvement.

However, the other half of the interviewees, more or less regularly, stays after hours. In case of Aleksandra, this is still not her main working pattern, although it happens regularly:

> The work comes in waves, so sometimes there is much more work, sometimes there is less. If there is a need and there are deadlines, then of course, I work overtime. It's just a question of getting the things finished, for instance if there is a meeting with member states, everything has to be finished and then if that means that one has to work longer, then that's it. (Aleksandra)

Also for Ksawery, apparently "on the flexitime", working extra hours seems to be under control and does not take an unreasonable dimension:

> I tend to stay a little longer than expected, but on the other hand I try to limit the extra time I spend in the job in order to keep my free time available for me and for my family, so there is in fact a number of hours that I cannot recuperate in the system, but I try to keep it under control. And what is also, I think, important for me is that the extra time that I spend in the job that cannot be recuperated and definitely limits the hours available for the private life I spend rather on training and personal development than on the projects that we have here in the office. So I also feel that even if I stay a bit longer, that is for my personal upgrade and development and so it's not only the job that gains, but also myself. (Ksawery)

The attitude of Ksawery is positive - he does not perceive extra work as exploitation or mere necessity, but he also finds personal satisfaction in it.

Likewise, Patrycja explained her longer working time by her interest in the job:

> Well, I work minimum eight hours per day, maximum - 12 hours, and there are peaks of work, so there are months, usually from May to end of June when it's very intense, so it can even be more than 12 hours, plus weekend. Well, why I do it? I do it because I like my job and I like to have things done well. I also argue with my boss about the job [laughter], so it's of course not that each time I'm eager to stay extra hours, especially if I consider that it's because of bad organization, then I try to negotiate, but if I see the need, I stay without problems and I just like doing what I do. (Patrycja)

Beniamin, although he was also among those who overworked with enthusiasm, apparently spent significant time at work – probably more than most of the interviewees quoted before:

> I start my work, between 8:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. in the morning and I leave work at 7:00 p.m. When I have really a lot of work, then I take my work and I work at home. I have a rule that at least I try not to work on Saturdays and Sundays. I overwork per month only around 40 hours, only because the system does not count more than ten hours per day. So I overwork more, but the system registers only 40 hours … We have a flexitime in a system, but I don't apply it, so I have these hours, but I don't do anything with them. I overwork because I have a lot of work and the expectations of my hierarchy are high. … I mean, I really like my work, I've always wanted to work here. I think that I'm good in what I'm doing and so, it is natural for me that we are paid to work for I don't know, ten or 11 hours per day. But, if it is necessary for me to leave work at 5:00 p.m. because I have a meeting with someone, or have to go to the airport to pick up someone, then of course I go. If you ask me for an average day, I left [home] at 7:00 a.m., like today, and I came between 8:00-8:30 p.m. (Beniamin)

Many interviewees justified staying after hours by work necessity. Although they did not declare doing it "for themselves", some show strong work ethics, sometimes coupled with active (although conscious) self-indoctrination. This is, most typically, the case of Maksymilian:

> Well, indeed I think I work quite long hours. I try to control it more now, but well actually I cannot really have any influence on this. It depends basically on how much work there is and if there is work, if there are urgent things to do, I need to stay. And the question why … Well, the first answer, the first level is, because it is necessary for the job to be done, and if you ask why it is so important to me that the job is done, well, I think it is a question of certain work ethics, certainly… Either, you have to believe that what you're doing is important, or at least you have to try to convince yourself that it has certain importance or meaning, because otherwise it would be very sad to come to the conclusion that you're spending one-third of your life doing unimportant things. So, if it is important, then of course, it would be stupid to compromise it, just because I don't want to stay one or two hours longer and finish the assignment. (Maksymilan)

Finally, Laura described the Commission's working environment in quite dark colours. Although she emphasized her personal involvement, she harshly criticized the management exploiting her:

> Well, [I stay] much, much longer, as I used to work, regularly, 16 hours sometimes even more than 16 hours per day. And this is not that I am coming to surf on the Internet or to stroll around offices . … [T]he reason for this is mainly that they cut posts, while there is more and more work, as there was disproportionately low number of posts created after the enlargement … but the job has to be done and it is distributed among other persons. They always do some, you know, post reductions, economies … . [S]econdly, as they noticed that I do a lot and I do it well, they rely on me and they put everything on my back. … And that is how it works … . But, apart from that, I like my job, the problem is only that I noticed this is not fair and I try to reduce it. So, I come to the office very early, … by the nature of things, it's holidays time so I do not have so much work to stay extra hours, but as I come at 7:00 a.m. or at 8:00 a.m., then, obviously, as I can't leave earlier. So, now, you know, for instance, I am at the lunch break, but normally I try to make it short and then I can leave a bit earlier – I am going home at 4:30 p.m. and I still have life apart ... . (Laura)

Overall, the pattern proved to be mixed, without any significant trend to be noted. Many interviewees who did not overwork, explained it with their family situation, usually small children. Thus, it can be deduced that both those who leave early and those who stay longer, are not in the position to practice particularly abundant social and cultural life.

Two more issues need to be noted, in this regard, to put the abovementioned accounts into perspective. "Overworking" is often a relative notion. One might "overwork" as compared to the standard working time in the institution, but still work significantly less than some highly skilled professionals work in certain private companies. Secondly – although this does not belong to the subject matter of this study – it results from certain testimonies that the workload is not always equally shared. The abovementioned considerations might

explain certain apparent contradiction between the testimonies of certain respondents (in the previous chapter) claiming that they had "slowed down" after entering the Commission and the accounts of those suggesting that EU officias work significantly more than "relaxed" Belgians.

As to the motives of doing extra hours, although many interviewees justified long working hours by personal interest, their explanations did not involve ideological, "Europeanising" motives. On the other hand, common explanations included professional ethics, personal interest in "the job being done". Therefore, their motivation could be, in a way, idealistic, especially taking into account that my research participants mostly grew up and entered into adult life in Poland in 1990s and early 2000, the time when open references to ideology were not considered appropriate, given the memories of the dominant ideology under the communist dictatorship. Positive values were rather soberly wrapped as resulting from pure rationality, common sense. Thus, my research participants might simply prefer talking about sober "professional ethics" rather than referring to their belief in the European cause. Moreover, in addition to more personal, specific motivations, one could also read between the lines that more or less subtle pressure of colleagues or the "hierarchy" could also constitute a more prosaic reason for overworking (see notably the accounts of Laura and Darek above).

The next set of questions aimed at revealing the relation between the Polish EU officials and other groups, such as Belgians or other expats. The purpose of these questions was to find out, whether they stay among other Poles or other expats or if they are trying to establish contacts with the local society.

4.3.3.2. Making friends in Brussels

Several years after their arrival to Belgium, my research participants (at least the interviewees with whom I had an occasion to discuss this issue) are still predominantly acquainted with other expats or EU officials. Contacts with the local population are more rare and include not only Belgians, but also ethnic minority groups (e.g., Italian, Congolese). This seems to confirm the observation made by Kennedy, who reports that most of foreigners had relationships with other foreigners with whom they shared the same everyday problems: "like them, they were away from home and were social outsiders" (2009:27). More specifically regarding the EU officials, Shore claims that they socialise mostly with other EU officials (2000:163), while Cailliez even states that co-workers become sometimes "a second family" (2004:81).

On the basis of the conducted interviews, it appears that many Polish officials had friends in Brussels already at the moment when they settled in the city. These friends had usually been acquainted during the University studies or in the legendary College of Europe in Bruges and Natolin (considered by Suvarierol (2009:421) as the forgery of EU Brussels' networks), but also during the socializing activities prior to employment: on the Internet forum of *Gazeta Wyborcza* and in the *Zielona Gęś* [Green Geese] bar in Warsaw.

This was the case of Patrycja, who said:

> For me [making friends in Brussels] was easy because of the studies. Since I studied here in the College of Europe, I met a lot of international people from the whole Europe and also other parts of the world and many of them came here to make careers in the European fields so many of them stayed, and they are a kind of family, so we always meet together, so it was easy. (Patrycja)

Jeremi met some of his Brussels friends in Poland:

> Well, before I started, I was a member of a discussion forum on *Gazeta Wyborcza*, called *Europracownicy*, so during discussions on this forum, I found some persons that were enrolled for the same competition and they had oral interview or oral exams exactly at the same date as mine, so I met one of these persons during oral exams and we keep in touch after that as well. (Jeremi)

Kamil reported:

> Actually, from the very beginning I bumped into Poles incidentally and not incidentally, because some friends from the university, they have also started to work here more or less the same time, the same period, so I knew them. Then, I had a neighbour in a flat that I rented who was Polish and it turned out that he worked in the same unit, so it was already, you know, narrowing down. (Kamil)

The experience of Emilia was similar, but differed by the fact that her Polish friends had already been in Brussels and had enouraged her to sit the EPSO exam. Also Adrian "had known a couple of persons already earlier ... even before [he] had an idea to work in the Commission". Emilia also mentioned school-related activities: "a big part of our friends now are parents of pupils from the European School from the class … where our sons go. So, this is the source of friends".

Those who met their friends only at the arrival, often made their first friendships within the Polish community, during the intensive socializing activity of the first months. This seems to confirm the findings of Suvarierol (2009) who emphasizes the role of national networks for the newcomers' social insertion.

Sometimes these were the real life encounters with the persons they had already known from the Internet forum – the virtual Polish community, organized around the future employment in Brussels was materialising as a "real life" community. Darek was in the first group of people recruited after the publication of the "reserve lists" after the *concours*. He kept the following memories of these events:

> As far as I remember, there was an Internet list Polish [EU] Workers or something of the sort, on Interia or Onet,[180] where persons who were passing the *concours* had already created a group and exchanged experiences; and it is already there, as far as I remember, where I met a few persons who subsequently came to Belgium; so these were the first contacts and when I started the work, the very first day, immediately after I got a computer, there was an email from a colleague of mine already waiting for me who had somehow come to know that I was going to be recruited and she immediately arranged to meet for a coffee and this was the first person I met. And then, the second or the third day, I met four persons from Poland, from the mailing list or from the group where we had already had the first contacts and we met at a cafeteria, here, in front, at the corner of *rue* Franklin and *rue* Archimède. These were the first contacts. Of course, later, at work, there were gatherings organised for people who had just started to work at the Commission, these were groups of thirty and some, all from the new

[180] Interia and Onet are popular Polish Internet portals.

> member states of course, where the Poles were the majority. And then the people who were first to come here from Poland started to organise monthly meetings. And during these meetings, I met plenty of people in the same situation as mine. And obviously, during these first meetings, I met the persons who had already worked in the Commission for two-three years as *auxiliaires*, kind of auxiliary staff. And this was also quite a numerous group of Poles. Quite quickly have I met at least 100 people. And then it was like a snowball, more and more. There was also one colleague who organised excursions outside Brussels, always a group of 12-15 persons, but these were different people each time, not always Poles. (Darek)

Adrian had similar experience:

> [I have met my friends] at the moment when the first group of the employees in the institutions [arrived] and these meetings [were organized], first in the Old Oak and then in *Chez Bernard*, I guess ... In Poland, there was this idea of the people who were going to leave to organize meetings in *Zielona Gęś* [the Green Geese], and I was at the first meeting and also at the second and somehow, I stayed in contact with these people. I was on the forum [*Europracownicy* of *Gazeta Wyborcza*]. And, at the moment when I arrived, I had already known some people, [whom I met] either before, or on the forum, but I also met a lot of people at the Polish meetings, certainly at the Old Oak, later also at the Wild Geese, certainly also via the work, as the Poles started to contact each other at work, then I changed the Directorate, then I was in contact again and this is how I made contacts. (Adrian)

Filip, who was involved, for several years, in the organisation of the social events of the Polish Community, concluded:

> I have the impression that everybody who comes here knows someone [here] already ... . So, there are very few complete newcomers. And if there is one, I usually meet him because he already knows someone from the University or from the previous work in Poland, so while coming here, he always has someone who introduces him into a new environment. (Filip)

Apart from the Polish community, my respondents usually made friends at work, or through their partners, encountered by the latter also at work or various courses. Those who have stayed in Brussels slightly longer, progressively broadened their social circles through other non-work related activities. As Klara told me:

> Most of friendships I have made at work and actually, all of my Polish or non-Polish friends are connected with my work or with my child's school or with my husband's work … . There are no other places where we meet [people]. (Klara)

The testimony of Dominika goes in the same direction: she met the majority of her friends through work, as "here it's pretty easy to go just outside the normal working relationships". She also met people at the sport club.

Finally, a minority of my respondents did not even mention the work or work-related networks (the network related to the College of Europe must be qualified as such, as its main

function is indeed to forge the future European bureaucratic elite). One of them is Maksymilian:

> After a couple of years, I think we started meeting people. Well, these were partly friends of my wife, met at the university or at language courses, partly these were my friends which I'd met … mostly in the language courses, I've also met a couple of people at the gym but I've never managed to transfer these friendships to the "real life" … But this is true that we don't have a group of constant friends if I can say, because these people leave or we've met new people, who are friends of the friends. So I think that ... it's about ten persons altogether, but we don't see them very, very often. And most of them are either of Polish origin or expats, but it is true that there is a couple of Belgian people as well, … of Congolese origin. (Maksymilian)

Zofia categorized her acquaintances as follows:

> Well, I think there were three ways of meeting friends: one was through my job, because I was at the beginning the only one who had the job, so actually just colleagues. Some of the colleagues became somehow more than colleagues and then – friends. And with some of them, after those years, we're still in contact. They come to our house, or we go to see them, or we meet during the weekends. Sometimes- somewhere in the city for festivals, concerts or these kinds of events, so through the work. Then, the second one was, through my husband's activities I would say, because … he is learning Polish and he also did an English course when he arrived and there he met some people that he also somehow brought to the household [laughter] if I can say. And with them, with some of them we're still in touch. And the third one is a bit of miscellaneous, I would say, because for instance, the Polish lady that has a library in Brussels has become a friend while, you know, we've just met her in the library, but because it was such a good contact that, it was just by chance that, you know, she became a friend. Or somebody, we would meet somewhere while travelling abroad, actually who was from Brussels, and then we would meet after with this person (when we were back) here, and then you know we've just become friends like that. (Zofia)

A separate category among the Polish EU officials answering this question were those who had lived in Brussels before they started to work in the institutions. Their stories concern mostly their relations with Belgians. They are also quite diverse, depending on the successfulness of their adaptation. They also differ from the main pattern, on several respects. Maja got along quite well with the Belgian people, although her social circles include also other expats and other Poles:

> I mean, well, when I arrived as a *fille au pair*, it was kind of difficult, as I did not speak the language, I was in a little town and I did not feel quite well alone in some bar or on the street, while once married … then I had the family ... and a lot of acquaintances ... The acquaintances, which I cherished most, were those from the university, where I studied. Until now, I have two female friends I am in contact with, well, for 20 years ... Then, at work. But, of course, they were not Poles, as in that time Poles either worked in cleaning or in construction, so my environment was a bit Belgian, a bit international, as in Brussels, the Belgians ... , well, they are many but there are also a lot of foreigners. But when I started to work in the institutions, at this occasion I also met my present husband who is Italian and who

> works as interpreter in the institutions and I was kind of "adopted" by his numerous friends, so at present, we actually evolve within the Italian diaspora here. But since I started to work in the Commission, I would say it is quite difficult to *fraternise* with colleagues at work, as there is a kind of cold climate, socially, I would say. People are very vigilant to separate their private life from their professional life. Even if you sympathise with someone, you are very rarely invited home, for instance, or for something else, except for, perhaps, a coffee Friday evening or something ... And my friends are not particularly Poles, I am not looking for Poles, specifically, as it's been such a long time I am here ... well, I would even say that sometimes I avoid them. I mean, I do not purposefully avoid Poles, but these Poles that I have known accidentally, I do not necessarily prefer their company to the company of other people, only because they are Poles. (Maja)

Also the testimony of Otylia could have very well come from a local person, if it was not for the fact that she mentioned some new, previously inexistent, contacts with Poles:

> Yes, I must admit that I don't know whether it has changed over the last three years, but most certainly, since I am in the institutions, I entered into relations with the Poles. I did not have it before when I was in Brussels. And I can also tell you that I had also changed the place [of living] and now I live in Genval outside Brussels, where I have just made new acquaintances and these are, very normal relations, either neighbouring relations, or old acquaintances, restored from past times, or acquaintances of my partner who is, himself, relatively recent … So there are constantly new things coming up in the social contacts. (Otylia)

Laura told quite a different story. I decided to reproduce it entirely, not only because the adaptation of this respondent spectacularly failed, but because it contains a comprehensive description of the respondent's attitude to different communities that the Polish EU officials may interact with in Brussels:

> I mean, at the beginning, I was a very open person and in general, I was not prejudiced against anybody here. My picture of Belgians was very theory based, but positive. I had a good attitude towards the country and, in general, I did not intend to stay here at all: I had come here only for ten months. My contacts with Belgians started on the very first day, actually, as my friend's daddy, who was supposed to come to collect me, could not do it and asked his Belgian colleague and so it stayed. So, actually, I've had contacts with Belgians since the very beginning and it was somehow natural. As I had known the language while coming here, I improved it while I was here, so I did not need to get to know them, it was as if I had been here simply and they did not suspect at the beginning that I was Polish. Only later was it revealed that I was Polish so they often cut off contacts with me, but I have never had problems in making contacts, as I do not look like a Pole, as for them a Pole is a person who cannot cope with his life, who does not master the language, who works in cleaning business etc., while I master the language very well, I am outspoken, look like an educated person, so they do not suspect that I might be Polish and only when I tell them, the problems start. So, since the very beginning I had these contacts and during the first years, I could not understand this mentality and I thought that I was terribly incongruous and, for a very long time, I tried to understand and only after many years, a German friend explained to me that it is them [Belgians] who have a problem – not I.
>
> With the Poles, I tried to maintain contacts since the very beginning, as after all, I am Polish. I did not select people according to their nationality, but I think that even in order to train the language (at that time there was no Internet, Polish TV etc., telephone calls were expensive), it was important to maintain contacts with the Polish milieu, but I realised very quickly that

> these are people of a completely different kind, the persons who had come from, with all respect, a slightly backward part of Poland. These are the persons who are not well educated and they are extremely dishonest, greedy, they made dirty tricks to each other, they stole from each other, they were intellectually very poor and, in general, not my milieu. … When I gathered (more information) about this milieu, I discontinued contacts with them and I even started having problems to speak fluent Polish, as I did not have that much contact with the Poles. I never frequented various Catholic Missions, as I've never been interested in this kind of things. That's how things are, in general.
> And now, I limit the contacts with Belgians, as I simply don't want to experience unpleasant situations, I don't want to stress, I don't want to quarrel, I don't want this kind of conflict situations, as one simply cannot live with them. I simply know it already, I don't have illusions concerning them, after so many years, and if I can, I simply do not socialise with them.
> And when the Poles [the EU officials] came, it was a big change for me, as it was a great moral and psychological support, as I was finally among the people whose level of education corresponded to mine… as, at the beginning, most of the people coming had lived abroad before, so, with some openness to the world, some knowledge about emigration etc., so we understood each other very well at the beginning and … it was edifying for me because I finally felt attached somewhere, as before, it was a bit, well…, I have never been Belgian, I will never be and I was a bit, like, not at home, although I did not realise it for many years, and with Poles, I could not have any contact for obvious reasons.
> And only now, since the [other] Poles arrived, it will have been soon eight years, I have found some contacts which are durable and satisfactory and enriching and I have a wide range of friends, from 30 to 50, so these are very diverse people, from different circles, with different biographies with different educational backgrounds and they also enrich me with more recent information from Poland which I do not have any more, so this is a good thing. (Laura)

Most of my respondents described making friends in Brussels as a very easy task. Some of them explained that this is due to the openness of the people who come to work in the EU institutions. However, a couple of persons expressed a contrary opinion. In addition to previously quoted Maksymilian (who referred rather to acquainting people from outside the institutions), the opinion of Ksawery deserves to be quoted, as it refers to the aspect of relations between the EU officials which is absent from most of other testimonies:

> It's not easy to make friends in the institutions. The environment is completely different than the environment I used to operate in. It's more competitive and there are conflicting interests among the officials of different nationalities and of different background and this kind of environment and competitiveness does not foster friendly relationships or informal relationships, so this is a particular challenge for me. (Ksawery)

4.3.3.3. The circles of friends: mixing private and professional contacts?

After the initial question about making friends, I explored the question further, asking my interviewees to describe their different circles of friends, so as to have a clearer picture of their social interactions and networking, their frequency and intensity.

Most of the interviewees confirmed that they had multiple circles of friends. Typically, at least one of them is related to work. These are not necessarily the current colleagues of my respondents but they work in the institution and often had been acquainted through work. Indeed, also according to Shore and Black (1994:289) and Abélès et al. (1993:9), EU officials socialise with each other both at work and outside working hours. Usually there is also a Polish circle and the circle of the partner's acquaintances or the partner's family. Another circle of friends mentioned sometimes are friends from university or from the College of Europe. Obviously, these circles overlap sometimes. Dominika characterised the situation in the following terms:

> I have several circles [of friends]. One is people from work, that I know from work, and we don't necessarily work together anymore, or we have sometimes never worked together, really … These are people whom I know from here or I met through my friends from here, so it's like my working circle, and then I have some friends from the university who came here as well. So of course, we stay in touch and we see each other pretty often as well, but we don't work together, we are employed in several institutions, so there is no common working environment let's say. And then, it's my husband's family as well and my husband's friends, so, that's the second one. (Dominika)

The testimony of Patrycja is similar:

> So, mostly these are friends from the university, so from College [of Europe - Bruges] and then I can divide them into two groups: one group is a Polish group, because it was a natural thing to get along with Polish people, and the second group is Italian, and this is mostly because after I graduated I got along … my new partner [who] is Italian. So, it was also easier to keep in touch with Italian part of College, but there are also other people who go along with us, these are mostly Portuguese and Spanish; And beside that … I think from work I have just … Polish friends, with whom I work … , but other nationalities I wouldn't call them friends. I just know them, and sometimes we meet, but closer relations are with them and Polish people at work.

Another example of a respondent following this pattern is Klara, who admitted:

> I think that the majority of my Polish friends ... if not almost all of them, work in the institutions. I met them either at work, or via the kindergarten or possibly school of my

> children, but these are also the persons who work in the institutions – this is one circle of acquaintances. But I also have another one – these are Greeks and these are acquaintances of my husband via his work. He does not work at the institutions, but this is also quite a peculiar [laughter] closed circle. (Klara)

This pattern seemed to be shared independently of the actual intensity of contacts and the size of the network. Ula said:

> I have one [circle of friends]. The closest friend is Polish as well and I met her at my work. The second one is also Polish and these are the closest friends. The rest are just colleagues … There are also friends of my husband that we meet, they have children as well , … and most of them are Polish as well. (Ula)

Adrian did not refer to the friends of his partner, but he had exactly the same experience as concerns the nationality and profession of his friends as the previously quoted speakers:

> Yes, I could assess that I have, say, two or three circles of acquaintances and they are not related to work in any way. I mean, okay, most of these people usually work in the institutions, not all of them, but a significant part, but I do not work with them, they do not work in my DG, for instance. With most of them, I have never worked, professionally. These are mainly Polish groups, but I also have contacts with non-Polish people. But the circle of most intimate friends is 80 percent Polish. (Adrian)

Also Emilia seemed to have a similar structure of her social environment, except for a separate circle of her partner's friends. However, in addition to Polish friends and colleagues, she also socialises a lot within the group of the parents of her children's classmates:

> As I said the friends are other parents to some extent, so we meet quite often like on weekends we do some trips together or we party together or we just meet so that the kids can play. Or we go to cinema or to some other events with children. It's quite around kids, but not only, we also happen to go out without kids, with these parents. We still keep the contacts with friends from Poland who moved here and it's on the same basis I would say, we also visit each other for weekends, with kids, and spend time together. And yes, I have also some private contacts with colleagues from work. I play sports with some of them and then apart from sport we also happen to do some other things together, we go out together from time to time. So, these are not Polish friends, but friends from work. (Emilia)

Darek gave an interesting insight into the social life of some EU officials:

> Well, there are a lot of these groups, that's true. These are the *cliques* of people who glue to each other, but these *cliques* are sometimes unfriendly or even hate each other. I know people from different *cliques* and sometimes I can't gather them all. For example, I can't invite to my place all these people who kind of belong to different groups, otherwise there could be no party at all. Everybody would flee. If X sees Y is there, he'll flee. If Y sees that Z is there, then Z will flee. And this is quite complicated. So, there are about three-four of these cliques. Myself, I don't want to belong to one particular group, but I'm trying to hang out with the ones and with the others a bit. Cinema with some of them, excursion with some others so as not to let myself closed in a little group of five-six people, as this is unsound. Furthermore, these *cliques* are preponderantly composed of Poles. There is one of them which

> suits me most, as there are not only Poles. There is one Belgian, one Scottish girl, one girl from Finland, a few persons from Poland and a well-acquainted colleague of mine from Cyprus. This colleague, well, I work with him, while most of the people from these *cliques* do not work with him. Not directly. Right, they all work in the institutions, but we are not in contact on a daily basis. (Darek)

While our interview was already quite advanced and had passed to other issues, Darek could not resist coming back to the issue of his circles of friends:

> Back to the first question, about the acquaintances, about these *coteries*, well, unfortunately, I forgot about two female friends more. One is German-speaking Belgian, coming from the area near Eupen, the other one is from Hungary. These friends do not belong to any *coteries* and I know them individually, so to say, and they actually do not know my other acquaintances, or [they know] very few. (Darek)

Those of the interviewees who had lived in Brussels before joining the institutions, usually rely mostly on friends they had known already at the moment where they started to work in the Commission or simply friends and acquaintances who are "local people". This was the case of Otylia and Maja:

> Not many professional contacts are transposed to my social life, although I do have two or three like that. These are indeed Polish women with whom we broadened so to say, the limits of the acquaintance. However, this is rare, as meeting people on the professional ground satisfies these needs that one has and actually, one does not look for such contacts. And besides the work, I have contacts mostly with people living in my region ... to whom the access is easy and who are very open-minded. At present, I have very intensive social contacts, perhaps even too intensive, given my age [laughter]. (Otylia)

Maja, in addition to the people acquainted during her "previous life" in Belgium and in addition to some friends from work, seems to socialise also in the circle of friends of her husband:

> So, I have a circle of friends in common with my husband who were, originally, his friends. Well, … we have known each other for six years, so this circle has slightly evolved. These are his friends. With some of them, I am befriended, with some others, we are just ... acquaintances, but this is quite a large group from ten to 20 persons who are acquainted with each other, etc. Well, I do have friends, or good acquaintances, from the old times, before my husband's times [chuckle], and before the [time I joined the] institutions and some of them are acquainted with each other, but these are such friendships that we are friends individually, not in a group. Now I have some colleagues at my present work and, you can say, we form a mini-group of three persons – sometimes we meet after work. For instance, I have two female friends and one male friend whom we meet ... , who know each other but they are not friends with each other. I meet with them, we invite each other home, sometimes we go somewhere for holidays ... (Maja)

Some of my interviewees, like Maksymilian or Bernard, admitted that they did not have very close circle of friends in Brussels:

> Well, the friends we have here are not very close friends. ... These are probably more acquaintances, but not really close friendships and, so in this sense I cannot say that there is really any inner circle. These people know each other but they do not come from one specific environment. It's just that usually when we go out we propose to many people in the same time, so they have occasion to meet … The distance is more or less the same to all of our friends. (Maksymilian)

If Maja claimed that she was trying to transpose her professional acquaintances into private contacts, others, on the contrary, stressed that they were purposefully keeping the professional world and the private life apart:

> No, in principle, I try to make a difference between my friends and my colleagues from work. I try not to have close relations with my colleagues, so people with whom I work. For example, there were recently two barbecues organized by my colleagues at work, including one this Sunday, and I didn't go because I don't want to have very close relations with them. I know a bit about them, they know a bit about me, but I don't look for close contact with them, so all my friends … work for the Commission, but I do not work with them in the same unit or in the same Directory (Beniamin)

> I mean, it overlaps a bit, but not much. Because I am trying to have, like, private life which is really private and not connected with professional life, as I am not careerist and I am not using professional contacts to deepen it with some parties and to profit from it (Laura).

No clear "stratification" of circles of friends baring any distinctive features (e.g., befriended in a specific period, being Polish or Italian, working in the institutions, etc.) could be observed at the level of the whole group. Those who arrived recently, usually have among their circles of friends those acquainted at work, or in the time preceding their entry to the institutions, e.g., at the College of Europe. Many of them are either Polish or expatriates. Polish EU officials seem to maintain dynamic but rather indiscriminately close relations with different categories of friends, even if certain individuals are obviously closer than others. But this closeness, except for a few interviewees, does not seem to be related to belonging to any specific category, e.g., Poles or other EU employees.

4.3.3.4. Evolution of social contacts

Polish EU officials live and interact in a culturally diverse social setting consisting at least of five sub-systems: the Polish EU community, the non-Polish EU group, the culturally diverse society of Belgians, other expats (both Polish and foreign), the Polish society in Poland, but also, occasionally, the Polish low - skilled migrants.

While looking at the entire "follow up" group, no clear dominant tendency concerning their social life could be distinguished.

As the responses to the questionnaires revealed, only eight out of 20 respondents found their social life more developed than three years ago. Two persons said it was thanks to better language skills ("Yes. I speak better the language; I engage more"; "Yes it is. I can better communicate in French, know more people, including even some real Belgians, participate in two Belgian leisure activities circles, have more expat friends"). For one of the male participants it was improved thanks to sport and language related activities, but also his wife: "Yes, it is [more developed]. I met some friends at the gym, at my Dutch course; my wife befriended some people at her language courses and their friends. We're going out quite often with them". As one woman explained: "Yes, in the sense that I have more contacts via *GezinsBond* with other families with small children." Another female respondent said her social life was more developed; however, her social contacts were restricted to foreigners. Yet another woman elaborated on the developments in her social life as follows: "I have more friends and have developed and deepened my friendships. Still, large part of my social life is outside Belgium (partly in Poland, partly in France where my husband comes from), and I am spending all my holidays and some of my week-ends outside Belgium."

Amongst the remaining twelve persons, eight said their social life was the same. As one of them explained, her social life was "the same intense as before. Mostly contacts with my Polish friends living here and international friends (Italians, French, German, etc). I

participate in cultural events and parties organised for international community in Brussels". One of the male participants, with a rather stagnant social life, said it was because he was "not really interested in developing it more", while another male respondent specified his social life was "heavily constrained to Polish parents who have children in the European School, where [his] child attends since 2011." Two other persons explained it was related to family obligations.

Four others revealed their social life was even less developed than before. As one of the women explained, it was related to her "bad experiences", as she "was very often attacked as Pole and as Eurocrat". Another woman specified: "I have rather a smaller group of friends with whom I stick. I know the places I like so I don't feel like discovering new places or people". The last, two persons related it to changes in their personal life. In case of one male respondent, it was related to the fact that he started working part-time "for family reasons" and spent much more time in Poland. Another reason for less intensive social life was the fact of having two little children and "not much time for social life".

Interestingly enough, while later interviewing members of both research groups, it was still difficult to distinguish common dominant tendencies in the evolution of their social contacts. My assumption was that, after initial intensive socializing within the national group, my respondents could have opened to other EU officials or other circles, not necessarily Polish. This assumption could match the testimonies of some of the interviewees, although they hardly ever put it exactly this way. Darek hesitated to confirm that some of his contacts died out, although he admitted:

> There are persons I am bored with, fed up with, that's true. And I do not even go to their parties. I have the impression they have already forgotten me, as I decided not to go to some birthday parties, as I started to have the impression that it's all repetitive and there is a kind of ritual each year, it's all the same bore, and there is nothing to do. So, I quitted these things, as I consider it a waste of time. Well, let's say I neglected two such *coteries*, I do not show up. Have things changed over time? In general, I have withdrawn a bit from the social life for the last year and a half. (Darek)

Also Filip, previously strongly involved in the life of the Polish community, indicated that he "had more friends from outside Poland now, as well as some Belgians", the reason for this being his enrolment to a music school (he had friends from the school). Some other respondents admitted that they had changed their circle of friends, but advanced specific reasons for this. Dominika started, like most of the new EU officials, by socializing with the people she met at work, but subsequently closed herself in a family circle:

> Well, the family one became more and more important … [W]hen I arrived here, the most important circle was people I knew from work, and now of course I spend much more time with people I'm involved - family of my husband and my husband's friends as well. Yeah, it evolves. (Dominika)

Zofia and Aleksandra changed their social circle mostly as a result of internal professional mobility. Zofia considered it a pretty normal evolution:

> Well, I think I've lost touch a bit with some of the friends that I met initially at work because I've changed Directorate General in the meantime. So, with those who were in the first one, with some … I stay in touch, but with others I don't, but I think it just means that … some kind of relationships … they have not really had time to evolve into friendship yet, … so I think that's just a normal thing. And then, well, we've met also some new people here, so, that's it [laughter]. (Zofia)

> Oh, it's hard to say. I suppose networks of the contacts with some colleagues fade away. Once one changes job … some of the network with some colleagues can fade. Just because one is not so much in touch, so unless one has other interests and becomes friends it fades. Same for some of the internship contacts and also Brussels is such a place where people come and go, so some people have left and then the contacts have become looser. (Aleksandra)

For Bernard, the event triggering change was departure of his partner to another city:

> I would say that is quite dynamic, because as I've said people come and go and it happened to me already and also my partner lives in another city which a little bit extended my circle of friends, but it's hard to say whether they are really friends or just his friends, it's quite fluid I would say, but definitely I have maybe a few friends that I see on regular basis. (Bernard)

Kamil re-shuffled the composition of his circles of friends as a result of his involvement in the public life in Belgium, outside the Commission:

> Yeah, I mean, if we take into account the networks of friends, … of course, some people they went back to Poland ... or there were new friends, new partners, but I mean generally the first circle of the closest friends and then the second broad circle with people who you meet at the parties, but not beside, you don't have much contact with them. I mean you can meet them every second month or something, but they are not really your friends, but you just know them from friends of friends basically, so that's the second or third circle of friends.

> And besides, after like two years, it was in 2007, I think, or 2008 I engaged in the civil society here a bit - in one of the NGOs which were always quite interesting for me – OXFAM - *Magasins du Monde*. I became a volunteer and then started to, basically, have the permanence on Saturdays from time to time, … I mean every week or maybe [every] two weeks, so I got to know people from this circle, mainly Belgians and it included sometimes some kind of social events like dinners or something like that and of course I think Belgians who work or who are in this kind of organizations they are more open than other Belgians, because this is about fair trade … But recently I had to step down a bit with my commitment there, because of the kid and family and work obligations, but this is still … an existing circle, not a very close one, but existent.
> What else, I also have some weak links with some friends from the political linkages. I was a Member of the Green Party in Poland and I was in Brussels before I came here to work for a kind of a *stage* in 2004, so I knew some people there plus some Poles who are also in the Green Party and who live here, so that's another circle of friends, let's say in the political sphere, but basically the meetings of this kind of people it's just you know, like every other, you drink beer and just talk about politics and in case of the Green Party in Poland, it is not really big politics [laughter] because this party is … just at some local level, local counsellor or whatever, so that's another circle, but not a big one , because there are not so many people there. (Kamil)

However, Kamil's situation is somewhat atypical, as he has also a family in Belgium:

> I have family here, which includes my wife's aunt and my aunt, but they don't live in Brussels, so we meet them only ... every couple of weeks or something. They are both married to Belgians, Flemish and Walloon, or actually married or just after being married [laughter]. (Kamil)

By contrast, the evolution of contacts of Patrycja took the form of strengthening the ties with the closer friends and losing the margins.

To a certain extent, the situation of Ula is characterised by loss of contacts both as a result of a change of working environment and following the tightening of certain ties to the detriment of the others.

The experience of EU officials who had settled in Belgium many years ago is usually slightly different. Maja lost contact with her previous friends following more intense socializing within her husband's circle of acquaintances, but most importantly as a result of her joining the institutions:

> They stopped. This is rather because of my husband and his abundant social life. This has not changed. But one thing has evolved in a negative manner, unfortunately, as lots of my acquaintances reacted in a way which wasn't really that nice or positive to the fact that I started to work in the institutions and earn three times more than we have all earned in old times while doing other things – as I have never been a lawyer in a private firm and they did not work at the positions where they currently work, and even among the friends … with whom I am still in contact, although occasional, like we meet somewhere once per two-three

> months, or we call each other, or else, even there, there is a bit of some kind of jealousy, not that nice, which I try to ignore. (Maja)

Laura got immediately involved within the Polish circle, once she had started working for the EU institutions, but she has quickly become disillusioned:

> At the beginning, we were not many, when we founded this entire network, I remember that it started with five persons. When we were 50 in a gathering, we thought how crowded it had become, and these were mostly people who had come here from abroad, who were already somewhat older – these were not the persons right after the university and I liked these persons, because their biographies were very similar: *"ils sont partis quelque part*", they have learnt by themselves what emigration is, what integration is and how it is to learn another language that you actually use in the everyday life, just like a mother tongue, etc. So this was somewhat immediate and obvious. Then, more and more new persons have been coming, more and more people coming right from Poland, younger and younger, and with these persons, I have a serious issue. These persons are very much self confident, very conceited, but unfortunately, they feature a very poor intellectual level and this is really terrible! The younger the person, the worse it is. I think that the level of education has simply lowered in Poland, anybody can study these days, anybody can get a degree and these individuals are very poorly brought up, in general. It is not only about education, but also about the upbringing. These individuals do not know how to behave at the table; don't know how to dress up to the situation, etc. But they have such a self-esteem that it is just excruciating! (Laura)

Some respondents said that they had not lost the contacts they developed during their early years in Brussels. Adrian explained:

> I mean, no, it has not changed. Actually, these circles, they have been forming themselves for a couple of years. However, during the last, say, three years, there was no change. I mean, perhaps one circle that I counted as the third one, meaning the circle of people I have met relatively recently, one or two years ago. But I am maintaining [the contact] also with people I had known before. (Adrian)

For Jeremi and Maksymilian, the contacts, especially those outside the Commission, have simply become less frequent, although have not faded away. Jeremi reported:

> Well, I would say, the contacts [with] … my friends from outside of the Commission, well, because the salsa course ended, so our contacts are not too frequent, as it was before. But well, we are friends on Facebook. Sometimes, we send a message, or you know, [we] comment on photos or events in our life, but it's not a face-to-face contact. I have more frequent contacts with some of them, so we meet, I don't know, once per month to have a beer or to discuss. And contacts with my friends from European Commission, well, I have a link. It depends on the frequency, of our monthly meetings, because a lot of my friends I'm able to meet only during these meetings. With some of them we meet more frequently, especially for occasions like birthdays or something like this. (Jeremi)

Maksymilian described the dynamics of his social contacts in the following manner:

> It's difficult to say whether they really have faded away because these contacts are not extremely intensive, so, there are periods when we are in quite intensive contacts with them,

> with some of our friends, and then we don't hear from them for like months, and then we re-establish these contacts again, so I don't want to say that some of these networks ... completely faded away, but the intensity of our contacts with different people vary, that's obvious. So basically, you can say that we see them in average every second week … I mean, with most of these people, but there are also people I haven't seen for months, but maybe in the future these contacts will come back. (Maksymilian)

For Beniamin, even the intensity remained the same. His response is interesting (although not perfectly matching the question), as the situation he described may be the case of many Polish EU officials:

> Because I don't have family yet here, and my parents and my brother live still in Poland and I am somehow alone here, in the meaning I don't have, how to say, a partner. I am somehow forced by the situation to have more contacts with my friends and colleagues. And, so yes, these people play a great role in my life, because I spend also my free time with them. (Beniamin)

In the same time, interrogated specifically on the developments in his social contacts during the last years, he vigorously denied that there were any such developments.

What can be concluded on the basis of these interviews is that, although the trajectories of my interviewees' social lives were different, the common point is the departure from the initial model of interactions, based on the participation in meetings of a broad Polish EU officials' community (on this, see Rozanska 2009, 2011). If my interviewees claimed that their social life had expanded, they typically referred to developments of contacts with the persons from outside this community (they mentioned language courses, *GezinsBond*, improvement of their language skills). If their social contacts diminished, it could be related to family life or restriction of their contacts to the closest friends – often to some natural consequences of their permanent, "matured" settlement. In all cases, the time of intensive networking in the EU institutions Polish circle was over.

The answers of the research participants seemed to confirm my initial assumption that members of the Polish EU institutions community who were initially involved in intensive socializing within the Polish group ("Wild Geese" meetings, etc.) broadened their social network with years, including EU officials from other member states and people from

outside the EU institutions. However, although the original pattern of socializing changed, the question remained whether and to what extent the main relations of my respondents are still with the Polish people.

With this regard, the previous research on EU officials suggested that this might be the case. Abélès et al. argue that in their private life, the officials often want to escape from the "melting pot" experienced at work and tend to socialize with people of the same language and culture (1993:22). Also Shore, although with less conviction, suggests that the afterwork relations seem less transnational than the professional ones (Shore 2000:164; see also Suvarierol 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011). On the other hand, Hooghe suggests that the proneness to national networking may vary depending on nationality (2001:105).

For those living in Brussels before the accession, joining the institutions has actually permitted them to meet Polish people with whom they had not socialized that much before. Maja said:

> Well, before I started to work in the institutions, I basically knew no Polish people, or maybe incidentally, but I had no Polish friends or acquaintances. By contrast, since I started to work [in the EU institutions], it has indeed happened that people approached me because they knew I was new there and that I was Polish. It was nice. And it is true that if I need to make a (professional) phone call, when I am looking for someone dealing with something in another DG and if I don't know whom to call, I always start by trying to find a Pole on the list [in the directory]. My second choice is an Italian, even someone I don't know, as I somehow always think that it might be nicer. (Maja)

Otylia's testimony is partly concurrent, as regards the history of contacts with Polish people, but includes the element of fascination and subsequent rejection of the "Polish forum" which was one of the main factors of the first phase of integration, also related to the Irish Pub Wild Geese:

> Well, not really [has it changed] in my case, as I had actually had no contacts with Poles, so rather positive changes occurred, that I have a few contacts. By contrast, it is with a certain amount of criticism that I am watching this Polish forum that I formerly appreciated a lot. It is becoming annoying, as they stew in their own juice and I think the forum should change the profile. (Otylia)

Laura, despite her criticism towards the younger part of the Polish EU officials, considers the arrival of Polish EU officials to Brussels as an extremely positive change in her life and still socialises mainly within the Polish circle:

> No, this has not changed, mostly because I do not want to deal with some people, now it is completely official. Belgians, for instance. I have replaced them with Poles and Poles are important for me. Because, despite all odds, there are a lot of people among these Poles who provide me with spiritual food and these are not necessarily outstandingly intellectual persons. There are, for instance, people who are 40 years old or so, who have had some experiences and while talking to them, I also re-evaluate certain things, etc. And these people are important for me, as these are, in my opinion, wise people and they have a completely different perception than people from the Western Europe. Furthermore, their life stories are completely different and this is important for me. (Laura)

This category is, however, particular, in the sense of their motivation to socialise with the Polish people: they are used to live in a non-Polish environment, so cultural and linguistic facility referred to by Abélès et al. (1993) may be secondary for them.

Another category which is at least potentially distinct, are those EU officials who, although they arrived to Brussels only after the accession, have a non-Polish partner. Some of them responded in a manner similar to other Polish EU officials who, previously to joining the EU institutions, evolved mostly in a non-Polish environment. For instance, Zofia said:

> Well, I would never say that for me, the friendships with Polish people ... were the most important ones at the beginning. I cannot say that. Because it was mostly through work and at work I meet all kinds of people, of all kinds of nationalities and I didn't really privilege just the nationality as the factor, you know, for really, getting to know someone closer. So, I think that actually now, I have more Polish friends than at the beginning [laughter]. I don't know, maybe it's just because you notice, after a while, meeting all different nationalities, that still you have somehow more things in common with the Polish people, so, actually, maybe for me, it was a bit the other way round. (Zofia)

Other interviewees from this category were split between the two "communities" (interviewee's compatriots and the partner's compatriots), which necessarily affected the dynamics of their contacts within the Polish community. Aleksandra confirmed that Polish people still constitute an important part of her friends:

> Yes, although my group of friends is very mixed just because I came … with a kind of mixed nationalities group of friends to start off with, because my husband is of a different nationality, so our friends are actually mixed. But there are definitely many Poles among the friends. (Aleksandra)

Further interrogated about changes which occurred in her contacts with the Polish people, in particular as compared to the early "Wild Geese" meetings, she added:

> So for me there was no change across time, but again, because I came already with a group of friends who were of other nationalities, Polish as well, but of other nationalities as well, I never quite relied on the Polish network in such a way. (Aleksandra)

The great majority of the remaining respondents stated that they continued to maintain close relations with the Polish people. In case of Maksymilian, these contacts were stable, but not preponderate in terms of quantity:

> Well, they do, they actually still [play an important role], but these are not really people from the European Commission, well, I knew a couple of Polish people from the European Commission and we were friends in the first period of our stay in Belgium, but I'm not in contact with them anymore. So, I can say that nobody from my friends here in Belgium is Polish EU official, but, other Poles yes. I mean, these are obviously not the economic migrants from Podlasie, but they are rather educated people who live and work in Belgium either as Polish teachers or in some kind of NGOs, yeah, and it is true that, well I've never counted it, but I think that they represent something like one third of our friend in Belgium. (Maksymilian)

Stanislaw and Filip simply confirmed that they maintained important contacts with Poles. Concerning the intensity of these contacts as compared to those with people of other nationalities, Stanislaw said that he considered them "on equal footing". Ksawery described the Polish people as a relatively large group of his "personal friendships and professional friendships". He added: "I feel this group is crucial for my wellbeing in the institutions and in Belgium and I appreciate the most this kind of contacts".

Some respondents clearly indicated that Poles constituted the majority of their relations. This was the case of Kamil:

> Yeah, I think this didn't change so much, I mean besides this Belgian NGO Oxfam, majority of people which I consider as close are still Polish. (Kamil)

Also Beniamin admitted that, somehow, he kept on socializing mostly with Polish people:

> I don't pay attention to … the nationality of my colleagues and friends, but I must admit that overwhelming majority of them are Polish. … I have a few non-Polish colleagues but not too many frankly speaking. Not because I don't want to, but somehow it turned out that I've always ended up in the Polish environment. (Beniamin)

Similarly, Jeremi and Adrian confirmed that the majority of their friends are Polish. By contrast, Dominika and Ula stressed that their social contacts made in Brussels were not numerous. Dominika said:

> The most important they are people I know from Poland from the university. These are not really people I met only here in Brussels. (Dominika)

Ula mentioned some new Polish acquaintances among colleagues, stressing: "they are not my friends, I just know them, they are colleagues".

Finally, some interviewees indeed strove towards more international community, like, for instance, Emilia, who, nevertheless, kept contacts with the previous Polish friends as well:

> I think it would be stable, maybe a bit more … what evolved the most is these contacts with colleagues from work that moved to private grounds as well. But still contacts with Polish people are important for us, because ... we share so much, that we want to keep it and it's very important, but it's not, as if it's not for any organized, I don't know events, or something like that. So it's really spontaneous, private contact. (Emilia)

Sebastian admitted he actually purposefully avoided Poles:

> I try to avoid the Polish circle, right? So that's the first point, but it's really difficult [to avoid them] … if you remain within the city. (Sebastian)

4.3.4. Conclusions on integration

This part of my research allows us to see to what extent the previous findings on the social life of expatriates and EU officials remain true in the case of Polish EU officials. It also provides material for reflection on the social and cultural integration of EU officials, as referred to by Eriksen (2007).

There can be no question of assimilation of the EU officials into any local society. Not only is this society itself multicultural, but, politically speaking, such attempts would not be seen as legitimate. Also, the term "integration", as defined by some authors, does not seem to apply to the situation of my research participants. Schoorl summarizes common definitions of integration as referring to the process of "becoming part of the social, cultural and institutional fabric of the receiving society" (2005:1-2). Under no circumstances can we say

that the level and intensity of interaction with the "receiving society" permits the Polish EU officials to become a part of it. Even if we understand (social) integration in the sense given to this word by Eriksen (2015), implying participation of newcomers in certain institutions of the host society, this term does not seem appropriate to describe the dynamics of relations between the Polish EU officials and the population of the city. Indeed, my research participants are not interested in the city's life, most of them do not vote and do not participate in local celebrations, they do not engage in the associative life, some of them do not even care about their surroundings. The Polish EU officials do not feel integrated into Belgian society and do not consider themselves a part of it. Instead, they feel "integrated" with the international community (which also includes Poles), restricted to people of a similar social and educational background. Feeling familiar in the expat community, they also do not see any incentive to leave their international circle in order to integrate with Belgians. Using Eriksen's (2015) classification, it would be more appropriate to refer to "segregation".

However, if we refer to the understanding of social and cultural integration proposed by Eriksen (2007), but also by Alaminos and Santacreu (2009), the situation is more complex.

If "integration" is seen by my research participants as becoming a part of the local society, adaptation is rather understood as the ability to smoothly function in this society, without necessarily establishing any stronger links with it. As the research shows, Polish EU officials feel rather well-adapted to living in Belgium but not integrated into the host society. Indeed, they have the capacity to function in the host society, without necessarily participating in its life or sharing the interests of the locals. The notion of adaptation, as understood by my research participants, can be assimilated to the notion of cultural integration in the aforementioned sense.

These results seem to confirm the theory proposed by Favell (2003b), who claims that the elite migrants do not need to assimilate into the host society without compromising on their ability to function smoothly in the new environment. Indeed, my research participants are visibly getting used to the host country, they understand and respect its rules, although they do not necessarily apply them in their own lives. In fact, many feel comfortable in Brussels, although there are still some aspects they complain about (e.g., poor quality of local services, poor weather).

The attitude to integration of Polish EU officials can be compared to the situation of Polish people who came to Belgium before the entry of Poland into the EU (some of my research participants arrived in Belgium many year ago, well before Poland's accession to the EU). For them, maximum integration in Belgium, up to possible acquisition of Belgian nationality, was necessary for their success and self-esteem. The power relations were unfavourable to them as people coming from a poorer country and perceived as economic migrants and becoming Belgian was seen as the only way upwards. By contrast, those, who came to Brussels after the enlargement to take positions in the EU institutions saw their arrival as the consequence of Poland joining the European Union: they were in Brussels not despite the fact they were Polish, but precisely because they were Polish and hence could be recruited to the institutions. The power relations between the EU officials and Belgium are very different and they did not need to become Belgians – on the contrary, abandoning their Polishness would be unnecessary, as they have a very strong feeling of being European precisely as Polish nationals.

Again, drawing on Eriksen (2007), it must be observed that the researched group of newcomers, having rejected social integration with the larger receiving society (although this option has never really been offered to them) and with the Polish "community" in Brussels, seem to consider itself part of another "*Gemeinschaft*" of the EU officials in Brussels. What

is striking is that, again, the ethnic factor does not count at all in their choices (it confirms the already mentioned opinion of Roosens (1989) on the situational character of ethnicity in the context of migration).

As my research has shown, Polish EU civil servants perceived EU officials of different nationalities as belonging to the same "tribe". They saw them as belonging to the same category of fellow Eurocrats, while the cultural and national identification remained clouded by their status as EU officials. However, in this context it is also worth reflecting on whether the EU officials from "old" member states would perceive them and other officials from the former Communist Bloc countries as belonging to the same "tribe", or rather, as suggested by Triandafyllidou (2002), as "distant brethren" or "distant aliens" (Spohn and Triandafyllidou 2003:7). In fact, as Carolyn Ban observes, "within organizations, there is often a 'we-they' split, and it takes some time to accept new members as fully part of the group, especially if they differ markedly in skills or values from long-time group members" (2013:35). However, in order to verify it, further research is necessary, this time on non-Polish EU officials. Special care would need to be taken to delimit possible division lines based on nationality criteria from those based on the moment of employment and the time spent in the institutions.

Compared to the expatriates living in culturally distant locations (see e.g., Fechter 2007a, 2007b; Beaverstock 2002, 2011; Coles and Walsh 2010; Butcher 2009; Leonard 2010a, 2010b), whose lifestyle was completely transformed after their expatriation, the arrival in Brussels does not seem to have substantially altered the lifestyle of Polish EU officials. Certainly, the latter has somewhat changed due to a higher income, stable job, becoming adult, having children, and settlement in a new place. However, the influence of the new country as such on these changes seems negligible. Having children, earning more money or getting old transform one's life independently from whether one has moved to

another country or stayed in the country or city where one was born. The phenomenon of an expatriate "bubble", observed by many scholars (Fechter 2007a, 2007b; E. Cohen 1977; Farrer 2010; Butcher 2009; Leonard 2010a), is much less visible than during my previous research. Most of my interviewees spend their free time in the same places as Belgians. If they frequent typical expat spaces, they usually do not do it with the intention or even the conscious awareness of separating themselves from the host population. They do not go to clubs reserved for specific nationalities or even for the expatriate population and they clearly avoid events organised for EU officials. Although the ritual Polish meetings in the Wild Geese pub could be assimilated to the "club culture" as described e.g., by Coles and Walsh (2010) or Leonard (2010b), the importance and frequentation of these meetings have decreased after the initial period which followed the arrival of the first Polish Eurocrats. Furthermore, as it results from my own observations based on regular attendance to these meetings, the character of the gatherings has also evolved: the group of people coming to Aloft was more diversified, counting also non-Polish expatriate friends and even persons met through "Couchsurfing".

The absence of seclusive behaviour does not seem to result from any drive for integration. Most of my research participants do not have or do not even declare feeling the need for further integration and more intense contacts with Belgian society. They maintain contacts from universities, make new friends among Polish and other EU officials, as well as among other expats. The majority of these friends are Polish, although other expats are also well represented. Belgians are rarer, but such friendships also occur. Most of the Polish EU officials have rather occasional contact with the Polish community of economic migrants from Podlasie, although they show no hostility towards them. The social contacts of my interviewees have, in most cases (although for different reasons) evolved from the initial focus on the community of newcomers to a more diverse pattern. They appreciate the

presence of the local society "at the back stage", but they are not strongly attached to Belgium. Many of them still feel they "belong" in Poland. However, some of these statements are less true in the case of Polish EU officials who had lived in Belgium before joining the institutions.

To a certain extent, a parallel can be drawn between the evolution of the social contacts of Polish EU officials and the research findings of Beaverstock (2005) concerning British expatriates in New York. The author observed that, after the first period of intensive networking in the work-related environment, British expatriates started to avoid contacts with colleagues, instead developing relations with people from the "outside world", often related to their place of residence, predominantly other British people. In the case of Polish EU officials, the disengagement with the initial group of friends, Polish EU officials (not necessarily direct colleagues) has also taken place, but seemed to have followed more diverse patterns: if the initial circle tended to include mainly fellow Polish EU officials (Rozanska 2009), new circles of friends include also other EU officials, other foreigners and even (although to a limited extent) local people.

The responses I obtained from my interviewees do not coincide with the findings of Suvarierol (2007, 2008, 2009, 2011), Abélès et al. (1993) and Shore (2000). Indeed, even if my interviewees maintained extensive contacts with other Poles, they were not necessarily preponderate as compared to other contacts. They often originated from the past: people interested in European integration were likely to have met before, in the College of Europe or in other universities, most probably in thematic seminars, et cetera. Thus, it is not possible to conclude, on the basis of the responses, that the Polish EU officials tend to stick with other Poles, including in order to stay within the Polish cultural circle or to benefit from the opportunity to speak the shared mother tongue, even if the number of Poles among their friends remains high.

4.4. Perception of attitudes towards Polish EU officials

One of the important points of interest of the present study are factors which may impede integration and adaptation of the Polish EU officials in the new cultural setting as, for instance, the not always flattering perception of the Polish "economic immigration" by Belgians, or stereotypes on Eastern Europeans and on Eurocrats. Undoubtedly, not only the adaptative capacity of the Polish EU staff depends on their anticipated perception by the others, but also their identification. In fact, the image of "Us" is also influenced by perception (of us) by the "Others" (Jenkins 2008b:21). Also Shore suggests that identity "concerns both how a group sees itself in its collective self-definition and how it is portrayed by others: it therefore incorporates both image and self-image and draws simultaneously upon the classifications of insiders (the 'emic' view) and those of outsiders (the 'etic' view)" (1993a:36).

4.4.1. "Are [we still] the land of cleaning ladies and construction workers"?

My previous research performed on the Polish EU officials included a question on the stereotypes concerning Poles encountered by my respondents in Belgium (Rozanska 2009). As this question was not asked again, in the context of the "follow-up" research, while it was asked to the new group, it is worth recalling the main patterns of the previously collected responses.

At that time, nine (out of 30) persons claimed not having personally encountered any stereotypical views on Poles while living in Belgium.

In the new group, half of the respondents encountered no stereotypes about the Polish people, in general. Some of them admitted they heard jokes based on such stereotypes, but they could not take it seriously, given the context: "Not really, if anything just in form of a funny joke, like any other jokes concerning stereotypes of other nationalities"; "There are still

jokes about the 'Polish plumber' and the 'Polish builders', however, it was more used in a conversation with friends in a joke manner. I have not encountered any negative stereotypical views"; "Yes, as jokes or half-jokes, but nothing offending; usually in the office"; "[A stereotype] That Poles drink a lot. ☺ It's to some extent justified, but every time that I encountered such view, it was expressed with humour and sympathy"; "Some – mainly told as jokes during social encounters. Our fondness of vodka seems to be exploited".

During the former research, positive opinions were most often related to the quality of Polish services (Rozanska 2009). This was also the case in the new group, where many respondents referred to acknowledgement of the Polish workers' skills and hard work: "Yes, usually in reference to Polish blue-collar workers (cleaning ladies, child-minders, workmen, etc.). The opinions held about these people are on the whole neutral or positive, and I think are fully justified"; "I have been hearing very good views – in terms of Polish workers being hard-working, reliable and resourceful – that applying to both people working in and outside of the institutions"; "On the positive side: we work well, e.g., service levels provided by Poles are generally superior to the ones offered by the locals"; "we are recognised as hard-working and honest people". One of the men elaborated:

> It seems that the dominant stereotype is of Poles as builders (working on renovating Belgian homes, construction sites) etc. It also seems to me that the stereotype is in general fairly positive, in the sense that the quality of the work of this type is generally perceived as good and the Polish builders are perceived as flexible and reliable. It seems that a part of the stereotype is also that these Polish workers often work illegally or semi-legally (to avoid the prohibitive Belgian social security contributions and taxation, though this is also one of the main reasons why Belgians use their services). I find this stereotype to be largely justified, i.e. this probably corresponds to reality in most cases.

The respondents from my previous research group referred to certain misconceptions related to the Polish people. As they claimed, Belgians were surprised that someone was a Pole, due to the disparity between their stereotyped expectations probably based on their perception of the earlier migrating groups from Poland (Rozanska 2009). Similar stories appeared in the responses of the new group: "I was asked whether I'd like to be my

neighbours' cleaning lady, once they learned I was Polish"; "we are the land of cleaning ladies and construction workers".

Another common stereotype, related to drinking alcohol, seems to be eternal. During my former study, my interviewees complained that "Polish people are perceived as heavy drinkers"; "Drinking vodka – something considered typically Polish" (Rozanska 2009). The same stereotypes were highlighted in the responses from the "new" group, together with another common stereotype, related to Catholicism: "People tend to think that Polish people drink a lot (which is very often true) and that they are really religious (true as well)"; "Poland is cold, overly Catholic, poor, we drink too much, we are the land of cleaning ladies and construction workers".

There were also some generally negative stereotypes reported in the "new" group, going beyond the abovementioned evergreens, although they were rather rare:

> On the Belgian public forums (e.g., discussion boards under online newspaper articles) one also occasionally finds a negative stereotype of "Eastern Europeans" in general as rather "uncultured" (presumably meaning their lifestyle, food preferences etc.). Though this may also refer to a subculture of Polish "lager louts" (young, loud and usually shaven youths drinking beer in public and behaving loudly) which are sometimes to be found in some Brussels neighbourhoods (St. Gilles etc.). From the point of view of an average college-educated middle-class Belgian, there is probably also some justification to that stereotype, especially since a vast majority of the Polish population in Brussels comes from the poorest rural regions of Poland. However, a part of the "uncultured" stereotype may be related to the old but persistent image of Central and Eastern Europe as somewhat technologically and socially backward. I find this part of the stereotype somewhat amusing, since some aspects of life in modern Poland seem to be more advanced than in Belgium which is a very stagnant country in many areas (notably when it comes to commercial services). Yet many Belgians still seem to live with the notion of Western European superiority in that sense, which does not always correspond to reality.

4.4.2. "We don't work, have too big salaries, are arrogant and don't want to integrate": stereotypes on Eurocrats, perception of xenophobic attitudes

Concerning the stereotypes on Eurocrats encountered by my respondents, only a minority (around one third of the whole research group) has never encountered such stereotypes personally, although some of them were aware that they exist or might exist. Those who

encountered negative stereotypes, referred mostly to the conviction that the EU officials are lazy, do not do anything substantial, yet they are extremely wealthy and enjoy numerous privileges: "Yes, most of my friends from the period before I've started working for the Commission think I do nothing and earn more than them. Moreover, they think we have all for free (*crèche*, meals)"; "I encountered several times stereotypes about 'eurocrats' in Belgian TV and press, on the street/shops (from random encounters) and at doctors .... The classical stereotype is that: we are lazy, earn too much and do not pay taxes (I even heard we get cars, petrol and alcohol for free!)"; "I have heard quite a few (as a joke or seriously) stories regarding "eurocrats" being lazy, earning lots of money and yet coming to work late, taking long time for lunches and leaving early"; "Sure I have! We are a bunch of do-nothings with enormous salaries and no connection to real life. My car has been damaged on one occasion"). In total, three persons complained that the Eurocrats are considered as having everything for free, not paying taxes was mentioned by four respondents (e.g., "we don't pay local taxes, although we use local services"). Four others referred to yet another common stereotype – about raising prices (and especially the real estate prices): "[Eurocrats] drive up property prices (making them unaffordable in some neighbourhoods for 'normal people'"; "the Belgians consider 'eurocrats' as the ones ... who made prices higher"; "they raise housing prices and therefore 'evict' the real local population from central neighbourhoods"; "they make the housing prices in BXL higher."

These stereotypes affect, in certain cases, personal relations with the freshly acquainted people and some respondents seem to have taken them into account also in the strategies of their social interaction: "Yes, people stop being nice and get distant"; "Belgians think that we do not pay taxes. They become reserved when they learn that you work for the Commission. Sometimes it is better to get to know someone better before you reveal where you work".

Another stereotype encountered, although more rarely, referred to alleged arrogance and intentional seclusion of the EU officials: "we don't work, have too big salaries, are arrogant and don't want to integrate". One of the male respondents elaborated on the issue:

> Stereotypes among the Brussels population seem to be fairly negative (though often mixed with jealousy). The stereotype is often that of highly (or over-)paid bureaucrats who do not work too hard yet enjoy incredible privileges, who drive up property prices (making them unaffordable in some neighbourhoods for 'normal people'), isolate themselves from the rest in Eurocrat enclaves, tend to be arrogant (e.g., always complain about the quality of public and commercial services in Brussels without contributing to them financially, and sometimes are even aggressively monolingual (English only).

Finally, many respondents complained about local doctors and service providers "ripping them off" because of their alleged wealth: "the 'eurocrats', can pay more"; "I have often been in situations where someone tried to rip me off (at the dentist's or doctor's for example, in a taxi, or while buying a house) because they knew I was a Eurocrat"; "sometimes they make you undertake tests just for the money, not out of necessity"; "[doctors] they always ask where you work, if you answer at the European institutions they charge you more!".

There are also more serious cases of negative reactions. One of the women recounted on her experience: "[I was a target of a xenophobic attitude] just once, with someone working for an asbl who treated me as an awfully rich person and did not want to handle my file because I am eurocrat. Not justified at all as attitude". There were also two testimonies on damaged cars (although I have heard about it more often during off-the-record conversations): "My car has been damaged on one occasion; I've also seen a Belgian reproaching an EU official for having Belgian (rather than EUR) licence plates on his vehicle, as if he was hiding. The fact is though that EUR plates can get you in trouble with some people here"; "Heard of cars being scratched but most annoying is at the medical services level".

The image of Eurocrats presented in the mass media (outside Brussels) also did not help them to fight the common stereotypes: "In Polish press the stereotypes of 'eurocrats' (as

rich lazy stupid bureaucrat) appear from time to time"; "Not in Brussels, but outside BXL yes, on holiday the Eurocrats are negatively received, as in the local media all negative developments in the countries are presented as imposed by Brussels, so then also our image is not positive. It's seldom that anyone would speak about the positive aspects of the EU. It's always easier to complain".

Most of the respondents rejected these opinions as unfair and unjustified: "'eurocrats' are not more lazy and less efficient than employees of other big corporations or maybe even the opposite in lot of cases"; "I think xenophobic attitude would not be justified, as we are not conceited or arrogant and I think we bring more benefits than nuisance to Brussels"; "These opinions (or rather accusations) were of course not justified"; "A general view that we earn a lot and do nothing at work. The "earning a lot" is justified, the 'doing nothing' is not".

One of the female research participants was of the opinion that the origins of the stereotypes related to allegedly not paying taxes lied in "the communication problems of institutions themselves but also the 'eurocrats'." As she further explained:

> Many Eurocrats do not know how to answer to such accusations. For example, as regards taxes almost nobody knows that we actually pay taxes (around 8% on our salary, property taxes, taxes on saving, TVA) and since we earn more than average we are able to leverage big proportion of our earnings into Belgian economy (buying here, going out to local restaurants, inviting guests from abroad).

Another respondent explained that it is not true that the EU officials have everything for free (e.g., *crèche*, meals). As she explained: "it's simply not true, we pay for all this and even more than Belgians (ex. *crèche* of the commune: 500 euro per month, the Commission *crèche*: 1000 euro)". There was also a woman who considered that "people still don't know much about how the situation for the EC employees is worsening." Yet another respondent said that, together with his wife, they "try to counter these stereotypes in [their] personal conduct." One of the men suggested these stereotypes "stem from ignorance and jealousy, simply speaking", whereas another one emphasized the Belgians "forget often that it is the 'eurocrats' who contribute enormously to the budget of Brussels and it is them who create the

demand for various services." As someone else argued, "most of the stereotypes have sources in little or virtually no knowledge of EU institutions, perceived through the prism of individual officials."

However, certain respondents acknowledged that a part of the accusations may be founded, at least in certain cases: "There are quite a few [stereotypes]: rich; closed; arrogant. Justified? To some extent probably yes"; "As in every stereotype there is probably a grain of truth in this, as there is probably a group of Eurocrats who do have most or all of these characteristics". One of the female participants gave a more developed answer to this question:

> On the basis of my own experience, these stories are not justified at all – my experience is of a huge majority being very hard working and working fairly long hours (although yes, getting good money and enjoying flexibility at work). Although I have heard that there are also people "around" who do not work so hard and might deserve some of this criticism. I have also heard comments about the size of the Brussels "bureaucratic machine". This is not justified – the number of officials working in the Commission being sometimes smaller than an administration of a big capital in a Member State!

4.4.3. New member states' officials as "distant Others"?

Given that Polish EU officials consider themselves as belonging to a wider community of EU officials, it is important to verify what is, according to my research participants, their image in other EU officials' eyes, but also in Belgians' eyes.

4.4.3.1. Attitude of old member states' officials to Polish EU officials and Poles in general

The respondents from the old group generally avoided the extremes in their answers. Nobody considered that the attitude of the old member states' EU officials to either Poles in general or Polish EU officials was very negative and only one person indicated a very positive one (both in case of the attitude to Poles and to EU officials).

In the entire follow-up group, around two-fifth of the respondents (8 out of 19 who gave a useful response) considered that the attitude of their colleagues to Poles in general was positive, while over one fourth (five persons) considered it negative. The attitude to the Polish EU officials was believed to be even better: eight out of 19 considered it positive and only three respondents found it negative. As one of the respondents emphasized:

> Such classification (old MS/ new MS) is no longer valid. As everybody recruited after the 2004 reform has similar problems and issues, it is rather pre-2004 (officials from old MS with a lot of experience) versus post-2004 (officials from old and new MS with short experience). Thus the "old MS" group is not homogenous anymore in their attitudes.

It is striking that, even if still in minority, a relatively high number of Polish EU officials anticipated the negative attitude to Poles in general. According to Filip, who did not give any clear answer, "there is no standard attitude. In private life, they are positive; in professional life it happens to be xenophobic."

Likewise, also the respondents from the "new" research group avoided extreme answers. In fact, most of them found the attitude of old member states EU officials towards Poles employed in the EU institutions as either highly positive (two respondents), positive (14 respondents) or neutral. Only one person considered it negative. Concerning the attitude to the Poles in general, one person found it highly positive and 14 – positive. According to three persons the attitude of the old member states' officials was negative.

As one of the women explained:

> Towards Polish EU officials – overall I think positive – because most are young, well educated, and ambitious. However, some secretaries from "old MS" might have felt resentment against some young secretaries from new member states who joined the Commission and created competition, but also some instability as they did not want to stay in their posts – but looked for ways to find another job quickly.

Another female respondent said, "they are positive towards Polish people but there is a bit of jealousy as regards affirmative action that took place between 2003-2010".

A person who found the attitude towards Poles in Belgium neutral, explained that this is the case but "except for using Polish services (cleaning ladies, plumbers, construction

workers)". The same woman who tried to indicate possible reasons of resentment of the old member states offcials towards the Polish EU civil servants suggested that the attitude: "Towards Poles – [is] also overall positive – many officials from old member states know a Polish cleaning lady or a plumber or a builder and I have only heard good comments".

4.4.3.2. Attitude of Belgians toward the EU officials and Poles in general

The attitude of the "host society" towards the newcomers is seen as one of the important factors that either facilitates or hinders the process of adaptation (see e.g., Berry 2002; Klekowski von Koppenfels 2014). As Amanda Klekowski von Koppenfels stresses, according to European policy-makers, "immigrant integration is a 'two-way street' " and it depends both on migrant's "own characteristics" and "the context of reception – [181] positive, negative or neutral – which that migrant encounters" (2014:14).

Consequently, I decided to ask my respondents, how they would define the attitude of the majority of the Belgians toward EU officials, but also toward Poles in general.

During my former research (Rozanska 2009), 15 respondents – thus a half of the total number - found the attitude of the majority of the Belgians toward EU officials negative, followed by neutral (10) and positive (4). According to two respondents this attitude is highly negative, while only one considered it highly positive. For this question, there were more indications than respondents, as some participants failed to give unequivocal answers.

The attitude of the Belgians towards Poles in general was found neutral by 15 persons, 11 persons found it positive, while only five persons – negative (Rozanska 2009).

I asked the respondents from the new research group the same question. As to the attitude of Belgians towards Poles, almost equal number of participants declared it was either

[181] She refers to "the concept of the context of reception" as understood by Portes and Böröcz (1989); Portes and Rumbaut (2006).

positive (14 persons) or neutral (13). Two respondents found it negative, while two others hesitated between "positive and neutral".[182]

One of the women, explained: "As [regards] their attitude to Poles, ... my experience shows that they have a positive attitude. But I am sure that some Belgians might think that Poles (especially those working outside of EU institutions) are taking their jobs from them". As another female respondent added: "We seem to be appreciated for our services (construction, cleaning)".

By contrast, the attitude of the majority of Belgians towards EU officials was considered negative by 11 persons, while ten respondents found it neutral and one person - highly negative. Only five respondents considered it positive. One person did not know how to answer the question, one found it between neutral and negative, and one between negative and highly negative.

As one of the participants developed on the issue:

> On the basis of my own experience I would think positive – but then Belgians whom I know well are either married to Polish or other EU citizens, or work in the EU institutions – and therefore are more tolerant, open and positive. Overall, I think of Belgians as a nation as fairly open and tolerant. But it depends on what they do – I am sure that there could be some who think that EU officials have pushed the prices of property up.

As to the attitude of the Belgians toward the EU officials, the latter learn very quickly about the alleged hostility of the local population. A newcomer in an EU institution is often immediately informed by "older" colleagues that the Belgians do not like the Eurocrats, he is advised not to carry the official's badge after leaving the EU institutions buildings or never put the EU car plates so as to avoid aggression.

Similarly as it was the case during my former research (Rozanska 2009), the anticipated attitude of Belgians toward Poles in general was considered to be more positive than towards the EU civil servants.

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[182] A few persons gave more than one indication, for example "positive" and "neutral", "neutral" and "negative", "negative "and "highly negative". Therefore, the sum of the numbers quoted above may not match the total number of respondents.

4.4.4. Conclusions on the perception of attitudes toward Polish EU officials

In the present thesis, I followed the assumption that stereotypes about Poles may strongly affect their integration into the host country and their identity. The theoretical grounding for this assumption can be found in the works of Daux (2006), Eriksen (2010), Nash (1989), Jenkins (2008b), and Shore (1993a). I was also aware of the findings of scholars concerning the stereotypes about EU officials (e.g., Bellier 2002; Shore 2000) and about Poles in Belgium (Grzymała-Kazłowska 2001b; Galent et al. 2009).

Based on the interviews and questionnaires administered to both groups, the initial assumptions based on the literature on Polish immigrants in Belgium were not clearly confirmed in the perception of my research participants. It might seem that the stereotypes about Polish people among Belgians, as perceived by Polish EU officials, are becoming less widespread and less firmly held. Certainly, although they have encountered such views, they do not feel perceived as heavy-drinking individuals (Galent et al. 2009) and do not have the impression that Belgians associate them with unlawfulness or the semi-criminal *demimonde* (Grzymała-Kazłowska 2001b, 2005). However, according to many testimonies, Belgians still tend to perceive Poles primarily as a "nation of cleaning ladies and construction workers", even if their image is overall positive and gradually improving. This seems to be confirmed by a number of stories about the confusion allegedly experienced by Belgians faced with Polish EU officials who are thus Poles not belonging to any categories of Polish people they are familiar with. Also, a high number, although still a minority, of my respondents perceive their fellow Eurocrats to have a negative attitude towards Poles. This might support the conclusion that, although they do not want to acknowledge it, Polish EU officials still expect to experience certain form of stigmatisation as Poles or Eastern Europeans. According to such an interpretation, my respondents would more readily admit falling prey to stereotypes about Eurocrats – about those of a "dominant" group – enjoying a high social status and economic

privileges, rather than to stereotypes about "uncultured" builders and cleaning ladies. However, my research does not provide any conclusive evidence for such a (possible) interpretation.

The negative stereotypes of the local population concerning Eurocrats are felt to be strong and persistent.

As mentioned before, some of the respondents thought their fellow EU officials of other nationalities might also have a negative perception of Poles in general – even if this reluctance might not concern themselves because they too are EU officials. To a certain extent (and indirectly), it justifies the opinions of Ban (2013) who has argued that negative stereotypisation of Eastern Europeans does occur in the EU institutions. This perception might constitute a barrier to their identification with and adaptation to this professional group.

It may be assumed that the perception that stereotypes still exist about Poles being associated with certain labour niches in Belgian society (i.e. construction workers and cleaning ladies), may contribute to the maintenance of internal boundaries within the EU officials' community, namely between the Polish EU officials and officials of old member states. The same stereotypes, but also the stereotypes about Eurocrats (i.e. seeing them as lazy "parasites" earning incredibly high incomes and raising the price of real estate), being perceived to exist among the local population would strengthen the boundaries between Polish EU officials and Belgians. The theory of Nash (1989) concerning the use and "processing" of stereotyped cultural features as a boundary marker indirectly helps to understand the situation of the Polish EU officials in this regard. However, the mechanism here is quite complex: these boundaries are perceived as imposed, but, to the extent that they are simply a matter of perception, and therefore the projection of fears, they may in reality come, at least in part, from the Polish Eurocrats themselves. Finally, the fear of negative

categorisation through amalgamation may also push Polish EU officials to erect boundaries separating them from the community of other Poles in Brussels.

4.5. Transnationalism

Integration of incoming population can be analysed not only with reference to the "target" society, but in a triangle formed also by the country they left – or, often, only partially left. This perspective is notably illustrated by the concept of transnationalism. Linda Basch and her colleagues refer to transnationalism as a phenomenon of creation of spaces across national boundaries through various migrants' activities of social, economic, and political nature (Basch et al. 1995:22). Such activities may embrace not only regular travel or money tranfers, but also extensive communication with friends and relatives in the home country, or strong mental connection, manifested e.g., by strong interest in social, cultural and political developments in the "old country".

Although, as it was mentioned earlier, in the context of highly skilled movers, this concept is sometimes amalgamated with cosmopolitanism, it might be relevant in case of my respondents even in the sense reserved by Val Colic-Peisker (2006:220) to the situation of working-class migrants ("an enduring connection of migrants with their place and community of origin"). Indeed, the EU officials differ from expatriates by their commitment to stay and live in Belgium, even if they do not intend to (or cannot) integrate into the Belgian society. They would rather – as mentioned elsewhere – tend to integrate into the international strata of a city or into the EU officials' universe, which is a prefiguration of a denationalized class of Europeans. In this sense, do they have certain features of *diaspora,* developing a certain sense of belonging to a community in the new country, while possibly maintaining "the strongest sense of … belonging" in their "old" country (Vertovec 2009:78)?

To answer this question, I decided to inquire about the actual links that the Polish EU officials kept with their home country. To this effect, I formulated a number of questions that

would help me to find out, firstly, what is the intensity and means of communication with Poland (in terms of travel, communication with friends and relatives, places where they spend important moments, such as Christmas or Easter). I also asked them to what extent they tried to live as they did back in their home country, buying in Polish shops, using Polish servicemen and remaining in the circle of Polish culture. In the following part of the research, I proceeded with more focused interview questions to find out to what extent they still relied on Polish networks within the institutions in order to stay in the Polish environment and obtain basic advice. Then, I also inquired about their mental connection with Poland, interrogating my interviewees about the evolution of the quality of their contacts with friends and relatives back in Poland and inviting them to reflect on how much they still understand their home country they had left several years earlier. Finally, I tried to understand what is the strength of their emotional links with homeland, asking whether they would like to come back to Poland in case they had such a possibility without having to sacrifice their career and standard of living.

4.5.1. Contacts with Poland: tangible connection

In this subsection I focus on those links with Poland which directly influence their day-to-day functioning, such as contats with family, practicing Polish traditions and lifestyle.

4.5.1.1. Contact with the home country

Leman pointed at the strong emotional and physical attachment of the previous wave of Polish labour migrants (mainly from Podlasie) to Poland (Leman 2000:31). According to Leman, these people were "'present' in Brussels but continue[d] to 'live' in Poland" (2000:31). Polish Catholic Church, but also buses that on weekly basis linked Poland and Belgium were the main means facilitating regular contact with Poland (while enabling

circular "travels", but also bringing visitors and sending goods both sides) (Leman 2000:31; Siewiera 1995:98-99; Grzymała-Kazłowska 2005:684, 2001:33).

My former research (Rozanska 2009) revealed that all of the respondents maintained intensive and regular contacts with Poland - mostly via Internet (email or Skype) (22 persons). Another popular means of communication was telephone, many persons also travelled regularly to Poland. In fact, all respondents travelled to Poland at least once a year.[183] Ten out of 30 respondents visited their home country no more than two times a year. Only two persons travelled regularly six times per year or more. As much as nine persons contacted their family and friends on daily basis.

The first question I asked to respondents from the new group (30 persons) concerned the frequency of their visits in Poland and their communication with friends and relatives remaining in the home country.

Eight persons (more than one-fourth) declared visiting Poland more than four times per year. Half of the group (15) visited Poland between three and four times per year but less than five times. Eight persons visited their home country less frequently, but at least once per year. One person said she had "several home countries".

Only twelve persons replied to the question on the frequency of their contacts with relatives and friends in Poland. It seems their contact is quite intensive. Three women do it on a daily basis. Several respondents spoke to their families in Poland "almost everyday" or several times per week. On the other hand, many respondents contacted their friends much more rarely than their family.

Only one person contacted friends via traditional mail. Twenty-four EU officials contacted their friends and relatives via Internet (often Skype) and 23 by phone. Twenty

[183] Although some of the EU officials work on files related to their home country (which might result in professional trips), this is by no means the rule.

persons specified that the Internet contacts were mostly via email (which may look surprising given that the research took place in the time when Facebook was already very popular).

In general, it can be concluded that the great majority of the respondents who answered the question visited Poland regularly and quite often, and kept very close contact with their family and – less frequently – with friends via Internet.

4.5.1.2. Frequency and quality of contacts with friends in Poland, possible evolution

Favell argues that, with time, only the contacts with family back home stay largely intact while those with friends are often challenged (2008a:203). On the other hand, Klekowski von Koppenfels suggests that both links with friends and relatives home usually subsist, despite their possible weakening (2014:108).

In this regard, a very clear pattern can be observed: the majority of my interviewees admitted that their contacts with friends in Poland have either completely disappeared or faded away with time and distance. Some of the interviewees claimed not having friends in Poland at all. Beniamin said:

> I don't have any friends there, no. I know a few people but I don't really keep any contact with them. Maybe because of time, I simply don't have time to care about these contacts and they haven't been really my good friends or colleagues. In fact, I don't have any close friends or colleagues there. (Beniamin)

However, most have kept contact with one to four friends. Maja explained:

> So, … [in addition to] the family, I am in regular contact only with four persons, out of which two are my close friends, one is quite a good friend and one is a good acquaintance of mine and this is it. As after 20 years, this is what I am left with, these were the best - the group from the university. I am certainly soliciting these contacts more than they are, as it is me who had left and when I come back, I am supposed to report. But the quality of these contacts, I would describe it as a very ... intimate and true friendship and … even with this friend with whom my ... friendship is the least intimate, it is still friendship and not just acquaintance. (Maja)

Dominika also reported having discontinued most of her friendships in Poland:

> I think that with time it was a good check for some of my friendships in Poland … I've lost contact with some people I considered very close friends when I was there. But I left eight years ago also, so I think it's normal that only the strongest links remain the same and unchanged. Then, I go to Poland twice a year, more or less, so it's not that often. And of

> course, with different Polish people we spend much more time while talking on Skype or just ... emailing or talking on the phone, but it's not the same as meeting face-to-face. But I'm very happy to see that with the closest friends, when we see each other, it's still the same. That's nice. (Dominika)

These testimonies stress also the positive side, thus the friendships Maja and Dominika managed to keep.

The stories of Zofia, Patrycja and Klara were also very similar, with their circles of friends in Poland reduced to their best friends.

A couple of persons responded that the quantity of their friends and acquaintances in Poland had not decreased. This was the case of Ksawery:

> I think that in the today's world, there are planes, we can see each other, I can invite them here and they come so it's no more a problem. I think that distance is no more a problem and we, and personally I, use different tools to get closer with my old friends and to keep contact with them and to nurture this relationship, which is much long term, and more substantial I would say. (Ksawery)

Sebastian reported that expatriation had actually even made him tighten the relations with his friends in Poland:

> Actually I would say that ... I wasn't a very much socializing person when living in Poland. But people change when coming to Brussels, obviously. It concerns me as well ... , so I would say that I have even closer contacts with guys in Poland than I used to have in the past. Even though ... I have life here, … I am simply a more sociable person than I used to be. (Sebastian)

However, for other respondents, sinking quality of their friendships in Poland was the problem they elaborated with much bitterness. Otylia complained that the contacts with her friends, although frequent and sustainable, were "somewhat superficial". Bernard reported:

> It's less and less frequent and every time we meet it's unknown whether it's going to work or not … It's less and less intensive. I remember … I used to call them on a regular basis and they used to call me. Now, we don't call each other at all. It's just meeting … we just meet up when I'm in Warsaw. ... I would say that before every meeting I'm a little bit stressed, whether it's going to work as in the past or not. (Bernard)

Also Adrian, who apparently managed to stay in touch with his friends in Poland, complained about the quality of these contacts, explaining it by the following reasons:

> I mean, the distance ... , the absence of possibility to meet after work ... make that you send emails more rarely. Of course, each time that I am in Poland I try to meet them, but I do not

> always succeed, although there are two or three friends that I always meet when I am in Warsaw. (Adrian)

Darek complemented this explanation with additional aspects, related to disappearance of common interests:

> It is notably with this friend from Poland that I see, more and more, that we have no topics in common, we have nothing to talk about. This is certainly something that you easily notice, that our paths are going apart, that we are growing distant, but apart from this, there is still a link between us, still from the childhood. (Darek)

Finally, a small number of interviewees indicated that jealousy may also play its role:

> I can observe a certain distance …. Sometimes it may be related to people who don't have children .... Maybe, because those who don't have, they would like to have, and they cannot have, but this is just my guess … Probably a more important reason is the fact that sometimes, you know, they regard their situation in Poland, in economical terms, as not very advantageous in comparison to our situation. Therefore, a certain distance when you talk with them can be seen, especially in relation to things like, you know, talking about holidays, or whatever. So, even if this might not be very intentional, this might be a problem, especially taking into account the wages you have in Poland (Kamil).

Laura formulated a much more radical diagnose with this regard:

> The contacts strengthened some five years ago or something, as I had the 20th anniversary of the maturity exam and I went to this event and, finally, these people wanted to stay in contact with me, as I think they consider me as a successful person what is very funny to me, as, imagine, there was a distasteful situation resulting therefrom during the event, as it was revealed where I worked, etc. and I think it was perceived like that, a bit as if this person was doing an outstanding career. I was not actually talking about myself, they have invented it themselves ... and then the persons which had not even known me at highschool started to come to me and be my friends. But I am not stupid, I perfectly realise what it may be about. And the funniest of all, when a classmate of mine with whom I maintain contact called me and said, listen, at [her] workplace, a girl who had never said "hi" to me throughout the whole highschool time, and I'll bet she didn't even know what my name was, was watching the photos from this event at work and telling [voice modification]: "Oh, this girl was my best friend in highschool! Now she's making a career in Brussels". So, people simply tend to exploit a bit and I am trying to avoid it. People tend to maintain contacts also out of pure curiosity, as this is a different world, they want to see something different, e.g., on Facebook and so on, so, this is a bit troublesome for me, as I have grown suspicious in this regard. (Laura)

On the contrary, Maksymilian seemed overall happy with the quality of these contacts, even though he also noticed certain negative phenomena that he considered natural:

> Well, I don't think that this is the case [that the quality of contacts with friends in Poland have changed]. I mean, it is obvious that if you don't see someone, that definitely affects your relationship with this person, because you don't have that many topics in common. I would say they grow distant to the extent that anybody whom we don't see more often than every six months must finally grow a bit distant, but I think that I still understand them very well and they understand, they know me, and I definitely cannot say that I have or they have evolved in

> a direction which have made it impossible to communicate. I definitely do not appreciate them less today than I appreciated them before. (Maksymilian)

To conclude, although the majority of the interviewees admitted that the relations with their friends in the home country became limited to the closest friends and, very often, their quality suffered from the lack of common interests and decreased intensity, only very few of them referred to factors specific to the employment in the EU institutions, or rather to the material status related to it. In the majority of cases, the distance and difference of professional or private life situations were at the origin of this phenomenon. One could presume that the same would have occurred had they moved to any other country to exercise any profession, or even if they had moved to another city or changed the job. In fact, the stories of my interviewees often point at growing alienation from their friends. On the other hand, in case of my research participants, these circumstances were due to the fact they had joined the EU institutions and have become a part of their expatriation experience. In certain cases, the reasons seem to be related to separation, in other to financial promotion and thus, a change of social class, yet in other cases, especially as regards young people, to the late effect of their passage to adult life.

4.5.1.3. Celebrating important feasts

If the actual frequency of visits and contacts may depend on the amount of spare time available and the intensity of relationships with friends and relatives, preference for spending Christmas or Easter in the home country gives additional indication of a solid link with the country.

The data collected during my previous study (Rozanska 2009) showed that a great majority of my respondents spent traditional festivities, such as Christmas or Easter holidays, in Poland, while only one person stayed in Belgium.

While looking at the new research group, only three out of 30 persons declared that they did not spend the traditional feasts in Poland – all of them being somehow connected to another country, be it by one of the parents or by nationality. Those persons spend feasts in an "other country". Only one person indicated that he spent feasts in Belgium, as well as in Poland and in an "other" country. This person added the following comment: "no priority here – it does not matter for me that much".

4.5.1.4. Access to Polish goods and services

Preference for Polish goods and services, including their regular consumption may be considered as indicating a strong attachment to the everyday culture of the home country. Notwithstanding such possible advantages of Polish services as communication in Polish and (presumably) lower price, such preference seems to indicate that even after having settled in a host country, my respondents seek to live as if they lived in Poland, choosing the familiar over the local. The same goes for the interest in Polish clubs and (to a lesser extent) restaurants.

During my previous research (Rozanska 2009), I asked my respondents about the importance of access to different Polish facilities or services. In that time, most of the respondents did not consider access to Polish clubs and restaurants as important, with a somewhat higher interest in case of access to Polish shops with specific products (13 affirmative against 17 negative). The answers were even more balanced as concerns the importance of access to different Polish services, (14 affirmative answers against 16 negative), especially plumbers (5), "cleaning ladies" (3), Polish doctors (3) and construction workers (2).

My present research revealed that 18 respondents (out of 30) found it important to have access to Polish culture. Some of them specified what they meant under the

term "culture": "books, journals, films, music", "films, theatre", "books, films", but also "events related to the European institutions" or "press – mainly through the Internet".

Furthermore, almost as many (17 respondents) considered it vital to have access to Polish services. Some specified that they were mostly interested in medical care (four respondents), dentistry: ("it is useful to be able to talk in one's own language although expertise of the doctor is more important! The fact that the Polish email list within the institutions is one of my sources for such information means that I often 'end up' with Polish service providers"), "cleaning services, workmen", "plumbers, hairdressers", "car mechanic". During my participant observation in the "Wild Geese", I even encountered people who turned to Polish udertakings for car or home insurance services.

By contrast, only 12 respondents - hence well below 50 percent - needed access to Polish shops or shops with Polish products. Finally, only two persons mentioned Polish restaurants (one of them was not even sure if there were any). Six respondents (two of which had not lived in Poland before coming to Brussels) explicitly stated they had no need for any of the above.

It can be concluded that my respondents are predominantly interested in keeping contact with the Polish culture. Given that a much higher number of the interrogated EU officials showed interest in Polish services than in Polish shops, it can be presumed that the language element prevails in their motivation over the need to remain in the Polish surrounding. They seem to act on a purely rational motivation: choosing Polish servicemen ensures not only the quality and lower price, but also facility in communication, which might be considered as an important feature of a service. By contrast, they are not particularly attached to Polish products or Polish food - one could note that the contact with a salesman is much shorter and more ritualized than the contact with the serviceman, where the tasks,

timing or (in case of medical services) diagnosis often needs to be discussed, well understood or even negotiated.

Acquiring simple services is an important (in terms of time) part of life. If, after work, my respondents were, to a significant extent, in contact with Polish service providers, one might argue that it could not remain without impact on their integration in Brussels. On the other hand, the relevance of their regular access to the Polish services "network" should not be exaggerated, as long as it is limited to the economic dimension and does not extend to other forms of collective life of the Brussels' Polish population.

4.5.1.5. Close friends: in Belgium or in Poland?

In order to refine the data obtained from the answers to previous questions, I asked my interviewees where their closest friends are. Indeed, the knowledge of different circles of friends and their nationality seemed incomplete, as long as I did not know whether the most important contacts, in emotional terms, remained in Poland or had been developed in Brussels.

It is again difficult to identify a dominating pattern of replies to this question, as groups of persons who had their closest friends in Brussels and in Poland are nearly equal in numbers. The replies of those who had their closest friends in Brussels were either very succinct (Stanislaw: "At the moment, here"; Filip: "Here") or put emphasis on the rarity of contacts, different experiences and relatively long period they had lived in Brussels. For instance, Darek explained:

> Definitely in Brussels, it's been almost eight years I live here and I had the time to come to know certain persons really well, while in France I have not had such good, close friends, as I moved often, I changed universities, or even cities and there was no time to maintain friendships. In Poland, I have one good friend, from the time of my childhood and, of course, some family. (Darek)

Low frequency of contacts seems to be the major reason for the relaxation of the ties with the Polish friends for Patrycja:

> I think, with time I describe [those living here] … as [close] friends, because, yeah, we see each other more often and with friends from Poland that stayed there, it's a bit more difficult, so yes, I still participate in the main events of their lives, like births of children or marriages … but it's much more difficult to be involved on a daily basis. (Patrycja)

Bernard wondered whether the impression of closeness he had of his friendships in Poland should not be put into question because of the distance:

> I have two very close friends back in Poland, or even three, but it's hard to say … They used to be close, but because of the distance it's hard to say whether this is still the case, because I have a certain image and a picture, but it's hard to tell until we meet. (Bernard)

Klara indicated that the mode of contact with her friends in Poland does not permit to keep them very intense:

> Well, now, it is mostly here. ... Well, perhaps in numbers it would be the same, but the contacts with my friends in Poland are rare and mostly through email. (Klara)

Adrian reported that even the persons he knew in Poland were somehow related to Brussels:

> I have the impression that it is here. Although I still have contacts in Poland, I feel these are weaker and weaker, I do not meet them so regularly any more, while I regularly meet a [Polish] friend who had come from here [Brussels]. So, I was in contact with him in Brussels, he came back to Poland and I am in contact with him more often than with acquaintances from Poland. But the interesting thing is that some of my acquaintances from Poland, I meet them here, as they are sent, professionally, to Brussels. (Adrian)

Those who had their closest friends in Poland referred sometimes to distinction between "real friends" and "close friends" left in Poland and more superficial acquaintances in Belgium. Kamil explained it in the following manner:

> In my understanding - the real friends you don't have so many, it can even be one or two. So if you take this into account, then, I can say, that the real friends I still have them in Poland, but this is only one or two people. But close acquaintances … I think most of them are here, and in Poland it's just like, you know, less than ten people plus some of them moved from Poland to Brussels for example, so this solved the problem [laughter]. (Kamil)

Maksymilian was even more radical in the distinction:

> Well, definitely my close friends are in Poland, as I've said no one of my friends here can be described as a close friend really; in the sense that I would really trust these people, that I would share with them my secrets … I still have a couple of friends in Poland whom I consider as close friends, and … I definitely have very strong emotional ties with them, even if we see each other twice or three times per year, so, of course the close character of our relationship suffers from the fact that we don't actually see each other anymore and we live very different lives, but as I said, I still consider them as very close friends and I trust them much more than anybody met in Belgium. (Maksymilian)

Clearly, the responses given by the interviewed Polish EU officials diverged on this issue. Those who claimed that their close friends were in Brussels can be considered as people truly anchored in the city, as their links with the "old country" were weak. On the other hand, those who identified their close friends as those living in Poland might be considered as having strong ties with this country. However, it is difficult to judge if these declarations were true statements of their strong links with friends staying in Poland or, rather, a declaration of their attitude to their life in the new country.

4.5.2. Mental connection

The second part of this section deals with the mental connection with the home country, thus interest in Poland-related matters and the impression (or its absence) of understanding the country they had left a few years earlier. Are they growing mentally distant from their friends and relatives in the home country? If yes, what are the reasons? Indeed, during my previous research some of the respondents mentioned they felt increasingly distant from their Polish friends. That is why I asked about the frequency and quality of their contacts with friends in Poland. I also inquired about the reasons of possible change.

4.5.2.1. Main sources of information

The question on the sources of information of my respondents was aimed at permitting a better understanding of their centre of interest and perspective. First of all, I asked the respondents whether they were interested in public issues concerning Poland, Belgium and the European Union. Do they still mentally live in their home country, following the political news, Poland-centred social and cultural journalism and "*faits divers*"? Even more importantly, are they looking at the reality through the prism of Polish media? Or instead they

tuned into the Belgian reality? Or maybe they are exclusively interested in Europe-in-making, alienated from any national reality?

During my previous study (Rozanska 2009), most of respondents (23) declared being interested in public issues concerning both Poland and Belgium. Only six persons denied being interested in public issues related to Poland, while only one respondent declared a total lack of interest in public issues concerning any of these countries.

As the present data have shown, all the 30 respondents from the new group were looking for information about public issues concerning the EU, while 29 about Poland. Twenty persons were also interested in public issues concerning Belgium.

According to the data retrieved from the previous study (Rozanska 2009), Polish Internet websites were the most important source of information (28 indications), followed by "other" (neither Polish nor Belgian) websites (16). Belgian Radio and "other" newspapers were regularly listened to or read by 15 persons, followed by "other" TV (14), and by Belgian newspapers (12). Polish newspapers and Belgian TV, both indicated 11 times, were the next most often mentioned sources, followed by Belgian Internet websites (8). Surprisingly, Polish radio (6) and Polish TV (4) were less popular.[184]

The present study has revealed, quite interestingly, out of 22 persons watching TV at all, only seven watched Polish TV, while six persons admitted they followed Belgian TV. As much as 12 persons indicated they watched channels "other" than Polish or Belgian. It may be presumed that these embrace the international English - and French speaking news broadcasting channels. By contrast, radio seems to be the preferred source of information about the host country: as much as 18 persons declared they listened to the Belgian radio (out

[184] However, in certain areas of Brussels, satellite antennas are banned (Rozanska 2009:84).

of 22 who listened to the radio at all), as opposed to three persons listening to the Polish radio and only two – to other radio channels.

Only three persons did not indicate that they read any newspaper at all. Out of the remaining 27 persons, only eight read Belgian newspapers, against 19 readers of Polish newspapers and 15 reading "other" newspapers (e.g., British and American). Internet was the source of information quoted by all 30 respondents. As much as 26 out of them declared looking for information on Polish web pages, while 22 – on "other" websites, including British and French. Only eight respondents consulted the Belgian Internet.

Overall, it seems that the Polish EU officials look for information predominantly in Polish and international Internet websites and newspapers. However, the majority of them listen to Belgian radio, remaining therefore in certain contact with the developments in the host country. Only six persons do not use any Belgian source of information. It should be noted that this group did not count any person residing in Belgium long before the recruitment. By contrast, only one person does not look for any information in Polish media or newspapers.

It can be concluded that the Polish EU officials generally are interested in situation in both the "old" and the "new" country, as they follow both the events in Poland and in Belgium. Many of them follow also other media (e.g., English - or French speaking), especially TV. Concerning their interest in the situation in Poland, the next question provides with an insight to what kind of news they follow and what their perception of the home country is.

4.5.2.2. Following the developments in Poland and understanding Poland today

All of my 21 interviewees declared following news concerning Poland, although with different intensity and sometimes selectively. With regard to this question, they can be roughly divided into two categories.

The first category is composed of those who, although they were not completely disconnected from the situation in Poland, followed the Polish news rather selectively or superficially. Most of them were simply not interested in politics or headline stories, although the lack of direct concern was also mentioned.

Maja said she was following the situation in Poland, but only to the extent that she was interested in public affairs in general:

> No. I mean, I do follow, but, I must admit, very few, but really few, do I follow the news, in general, as my concept of life is very "intimistic" and so is my attitude to civic life. So, I do not follow, but not because it is Poland, but [I do not follow] in general. (Maja)

Similarly as many other interviewees, Maja seemed disgusted by the political situation in Poland in mid - 2000s, a period of ascension of right-wing, conservative parties and of intensive "cleansing" of the Polish political life from people accused (sometimes abusively) of corruption or links with the communist *ancien regime*:

> And there was a period [in my life] when I did not read Polish newspapers at all, I did not watch TV, as a principle, as the political life in the years 2005-2006 seemed so stupid to me that it was getting on my nerves. So, I stopped. (Maja)

She also distanced herself from more popular phenomena in the Polish press and media, which also appeared and grew eminent in the same period:

> Well, then I started again, so as to know something, still, although I certainly do not know about various events, I do not know who "Madzia's mother"[185] is - reportedly everyone knows [laughter]. I mean, now I know, as I was [in Poland] for holidays, but I had not known until then, before I saw so many articles [about her], I didn't know what it was about, or different silly things, well, no, even those more serious, concerning the political life, I rather tend to read only titles in the newspaper, every two days. So, I do not know what is going on, but this is my fault, so to say, not because there is something strange going on there. (Maja)

[185] A presumed infanticide mother, a negative character from the tabloid stories in Poland, become a symbol of "tabloidisation" of the Polish press and of the intellectual decline of the readers, indulging in cheap emotions.

Emilia's involvement in following the Polish news seems to be of a similar intensity, although with less conscious selectivity and with less expressed criticism:

> [I follow the developments in Poland] to some extent, yes. So, I look on the Internet, not regularly, but from time to time. I'm interested of course; I visit Poland - maybe not too often ... but for slightly longer periods. So, yes, I'm interested in what's happening in Poland, but I'm not, you know, living as if [I were] mentally in Poland. I'm not really closely following and giving so much attention to things that are happening in Poland. (Emilia)

Also Darek admitted that he kept distance with the present-day Poland, openly claiming that he is interested rather in history than in the present day developments, but still checked the news:

> Actually, I am interested not that much in contemporary Poland, but old Poland, the history of Poland, then. I have no TV, so I do not watch TV, either Polish or other. But in the Internet, I check the same things for Poland that I check for Belgium or France. Especially concerning economy or politics. Although, while browsing the Internet newspapers and these portals, I have the impression that the Poles are particularly interested in sport and fashion, these things, "people", do not interest me at all. I am more interested in literature, and also the older one. (Darek)

Similarly, Bernard followed the Polish news in a pretty superficial manner, but in his case, this was clearly related to the fact that he did not live in Poland anymore:

> Very superficially. I don't watch any Polish TV, I go to Polish websites just to check on the latest news, what's new, but I do not necessarily click to read; I just check the headlines and if there is nothing major going on, I don't even click. So, I do not really follow that much. … I'm not concerned first of all by it directly, so I don't feel that ... As I've just said, sometimes I don't even check what's behind the headline, so I'm very cool about it and I follow superficially just the headlines. (Bernard)

Also Aleksandra indicated that the lack of immediate concern was at least one of the reasons for her diminished interest in public affairs in Poland:

> I follow a bit. I don't follow the news as much as I maybe would like to … At the moment I haven't got one, but I'm going to have access to Polish TV. It is a bit distant, for sure, because living in Poland of course, one is in the middle of all the developments, here my developments are what's going on in Brussels, not even in Belgium nationally, but EU issues, work, personal life. So actually, I find myself discussing, thinking about politics very little. Unless, there are things like the Euro Championships were, it's a big thing that happens in Poland, then of course I'll be more interested and I will look into it. So I'm sure that I know less, but it's the personal thing. I know that there are friends here who know just as much as Poles living in Poland, but yes, because I don't watch news as much, for instance they would watch every night … In Poland I would watch TVN24,[186] here I'll watch BBC World, so okay, I will try to make up maybe on Internet; the basic news that I get are different than my friends in Poland. (Aleksandra)

[186] Poland's first 24-hour news channel launched in 2001.

The second category of interviewees was composed of people who, despite living in Brussels, were vividly interested in what is going on in their home country.

Beniamin, although his links with Poland in the purely private sphere seemed weak (he notably declared having no more close friends in Poland) and his social life was focused in Brussels, surprised me with a very strong statement concerning his interest in public life in Poland:

> I feel Polish, and that is why I follow closely all developments in Poland. I watch Polish television, I read Polish newspapers, I watch Internet, Polish websites and I listen to the Polish radio, so, I feel like, I'm involved in Polish political, social and economic life in the same way as when I was living there. Nothing has changed. (Beniamin)

Ksawery considered that he was as much in touch with the situation in Poland as any person living in this country:

> Yes, I read Polish on-line newspapers sometimes and I watch Polish TV almost everyday, so I have a feeling that I have the same kind of access to the media as if living in Poland. (Ksawery)

Ula thought that she might know even more about the Polish public life than an average Polish person:

> I sometimes think I know more than they in Poland [laughter] … We watch Polish TV, we listen to Polish radio, so we know politics and my husband is interested in politics, Polish politics, so I know it on a daily basis, this is not the problem, so I feel as living still in Poland [laughter] I would say. (Ula)

Also Kamil said he was making his best to stay up to date:

> I try to be connected in terms of being up to date with what's going on, so I read Polish newspapers, I mean, magazines, some of them. When I come to Poland, I take a good number of them with me to Brussels so that I can read it for the next few months, plus of course the Internet, plus the radio. (Kamil)

Stanislaw claimed that he was more in touch with the Polish reality than in the time he still lived in his home country, as his knowledge of the functioning of political mechanisms enabled him to better understand the present and to predict the future:

> [In the past] it was my duty to make a press release and press verification on daily basis. Even right now, I'm starting a day by browsing Polish news, but I'm also looking for some reference point in various … media. No, I cannot say that I'm coming to Poland and I don't understand it. Actually, it's something opposite. Thanks to knowing the process of the

> creation of law in the EU and thanks to knowing the Polish political field and having experience in politics in Parliament, reading a lot, in many cases, I don't want to boast, but I can easily predict what will happen, having in mind the current development in Poland and the EU. (Stanislaw)

Laura, who had lived in Brussels already for many years, described how the events related to the Polish membership in the EU inspired her to follow the Polish reality more closely:

> Yes, [I follow the developments in Poland] the more and more ... Once, I was cut off to the extent that my Polish was disappearing and now I have Polish TV and the Internet, I read newspapers every day, so I am making an effort now. I was, for instance, very happy when there was Polish presidency, as it had a very rich cultural offer and in general, I am excited about this kind of Polish events. I am trying to participate whenever I can ... For instance, from the cultural point of view, there was a separation, as I lived in a completely different world, not much was heard about Poland and I am trying hard so as to make everything work in parallel. When I go to Poland, I am trying to go to the theatre and so on, and I also talk a lot to people about such various things, so I am slowly catching up. (Laura)

The case of Laura is unique, but might nevertheless be a starting point for reflection. Laura came to Belgium as a migrant, not because she was Polish, but "despite" she was Polish. It may be presumed that she perceived integration into the Belgian society as the best possible option. Maintaining mental connection with the old country could be perceived as likely to slow down this process. By contrast, she became EU official precisely because she was Polish, she passed the *concours* and entered into her new function as a national of a new EU country. She still lives in Belgium, but her strategies towards different communities could not be the same. In fact, tightening links with Belgium was not that important anymore, she did not need to aspire to become someone else - she could be happy staying an inhabitant of a pluricultural, international city, a member of the cast of conscious Europeans and a Pole. In this context, the old country and the old identification have become attractive to her again.

It is also interesting that in case of some interviewees, their employment in the Commission actually prompted more interest in Polish political and social life, as the new perspective they gained offered them better possibilities to understand it. It might be deduced that for them, moving to Brussels was not that much a "horizontal" move to another

European country with it own national perspective, but rather a "vertical" move to the capital of Europe with its "meta" perspective. Such impression may be due to the nature of their work – interviewees whose tasks were purely "internal" (such as HR or logistics) referred to a "broader perspective" somewhat less often than those involved in contacts with member states on a regular basis.

The second question I asked to my interviewees in relation to the previous one concerned the manner they looked at the Polish reality. Most importantly, I was interested in whether the fact that they worked in the EU institutions and had stayed abroad for considerable time, has influenced their perception and analysis of the situation in Poland, whether they could notice significant differences between their understanding or perception and the understanding by their Polish friends and acquaintances. In other terms, I wanted to know whether there was any "mental evolution" triggered by the employment in the institutions in Brussels and if so, in which direction.

Only very few of my interviewees considered that all years spent abroad had not affected their perception of the Polish "reality". This is the case of Klara, who said:

> I think that this has not changed, no. It is not that I observe things now from the perspective of a person who is not attached to the home country, who has left long time ago and does not understand anymore what it is about, no. I think I still sense these problems as I did earlier. (Klara)

Emilia admitted that perhaps her perception is a bit wider since she had left the country, but still considered that she understood in a pretty similar way to her compatriots back in Poland:

> No, I think it's similar. I wouldn't say that I have a different perspective. Okay, maybe I have, you know, a bit wider view, because I learned about realities in other countries … But normally, I would not say that I have a different perspective and I think I have the same understanding as I used to have, so I don't think it has changed. (Emilia)

Also Filip stated that he had the same perception as once he lived in Poland.

However, the majority of the interviewees who answered this question considered that their perception had changed. In certain cases, this impression was not very strong and did not concern a total lack of understanding, but rather a different angle of looking at things, due

to slightly different information assimilated, different experience or a broader perspective offered by their life in Brussels. For instance, Adrian said:

> I would like my perception to be the same as if I were in Poland, but I know that this is impossible and, independently of whether I would wish so or not, I certainly have a different perception to what I would have if I were in Poland …. I do not know Polish advertisements, Polish billboards, I do not know Polish stuff, that I could have heard at work from acquaintances living in Poland, now I can only learn what is going on in Belgium. (Adrian)

Dominika found this different way of looking at things perfectly natural, but also mutually enriching in the context of her friendly relations in Poland:

> We discover different things. Of course, if you don't evolve very close to people who are surrounding you then, well, you're evolving in different ways, but it's something very enriching in a way because then when we really need, we cross our latest discoveries, so I … like it. (Dominika)

Ksawery also referred to the broader perspective he had acquired since he had begun his career in the institutions, which made him perceive certain things in a more critical manner:

> I also see that my perspective and my point of view is different than the one of my compatriots, because, maybe, of our experiences here in Brussels and here in the institutions. Definitely I'm more critical about what's going on in Poland, because I know other cultures and I know other countries and I also appreciate certain values that exist in Poland and that emanate through the media, which I have personal reflections on. There is also a group of issues and subjects that interest me the most – those are in principle the issues that I'm dealing with as a professional in the institutions. And those issues, I observe similar processes in my country through the media, so I'm becoming more critical about them, because of my present experiences. (Ksawery)

The same idea – although expressed differently - came back in the testimonies of several interviewees. Otylia said:

> I perceive it differently. To understand, well, it is difficult, to make some kind of analysis, but I am concerned by various issues and events, in a way ... Some of them drive me crazy and I think that in contemporary Europe or the World, certain things should not take place at all. However, I must admit that it pleases me, (as I don't like saying that I am proud of it), [laughter], … that Poland is well perceived. ... And I follow [the news] ... actually, every day, I read the Polish press on the Internet. (Otylia)

Maja gave a practical example of this difference of perspectives:

> I certainly perceive things differently from the others, I don't know, my family who stayed there, as I have a different perspective. For instance, such issues as immigration, or say, some Muslim issues. Sometimes when my dad, who is very intelligent, enlightened and open, when he speaks about Muslim people, it gives me the creeps, as it seems to me these are very racist views, although he is not racist. So these are the experiences I have, different from theirs and thus, I see it in a different way, don't know if it's better ... (Maja)

Patrycja, by contrast, harshly (although indirectly) criticized the Polish attitude to their individual fates, although she also expressed pride of the recent Polish achievements and praised certain qualities of her compatriots:

> Yes, there are some issues that I don't understand anymore, like the complaining mood, I think that, for me it's difficult to hear how my Polish friends or family complain about how Poland looks, or about Polish development, because I'm very proud of Poland and how it changes while we're not there, and I'm just really proud about how we develop and how energetic we are, how eager to work and to have a business and so on. But on the other hand, I see also the differences in the approach between me and my friends who stayed in Poland. I see less flexibility on their side and they're a bit more afraid about change. I remember a recent discussion when my best friend's boyfriend was at risk of losing his job, and so she was worrying a lot of what they would do, and my answer was: "Well, you will search for a job", and she said: "No, in our city it is not that easy". Then I said, "Well you will go to another city, you could go to Warsaw" and she was like frightened what I was talking about and it's not far away, it's like two hours by car from my city, and for her it was a shocking perspective, for me it was natural. (Patrycja)

Patrycja was not the only one to appreciate changes but also criticise attitudes in the old country. Stanislaw elaborated on his understanding of Poland (as an outsider) in comparison to the compatriots living there, whom he described as "the most complaining nation in Europe":

> No, of course, that [my understanding of Poland] is different … but here I have to touch two issues. First, the evidence that my understanding of Poland is correct. Listen, I'm signed on Gazeta.pl forum under one nick, I don't want to boast again, but whenever I place a comment, I'm receiving top ten comments, after few hours, okay? And I will not give you the nickname, but trust me, this is it. ... [The second issue is that] Poles as the most complaining nation in Europe, they are demanding. ... Many people who are here, they are complaining about Poland; they go to Poland, they are complaining about Belgium or vice versa. … Maybe it's again due to the fact that I knew a little bit of this "political kitchen" and I know what is real, what is not real; what is feasible, what is not feasible. There is a lot of people who are demanding maximum things and they don't know that in reality it's impossible. For example, look, classical case: is a glass half full or half empty? And the example with the Polish motorways. Do you know that Poland has tripled the kilometres of its motorways within the last ten years. This is my way of thinking, but we have still the people, who are saying: "yeah, but they are in delays, there are problems" ... and I'm saying: "come on, we were waiting for one hundred years … for these motorways and now you're complaining for these six months [of delays]? "And quality is wrong". No! Quality is not wrong, there are guarantees". I was responsible for motorways in Poland. So there are guarantees for 15 years for a quality of motorway and if something happens, the guy who was producing this will do it. So, you see, this is the question of approach. Poles are very demanding. I only see one good thing in this picture. They are demanding because without any superstitions, they are comparing directly Poland to the best countries in Europe. … Poles are ambitious and they are trying to keep up Poland with the rest. You know, even a few years ago, we could only dream to be compared to Greece and Portugal, now we are … . We are developing faster than we expected and we're already at this level … . So it's good that Poles are comparing themselves to the best: to Norway, to Sweden … . (Stanislaw)

In certain cases, differences and the lack of understanding had their roots not that much in the expatriation or in the EU institutions, but rather in differences of convictions or certain cultural differences which might be due to the upbringing and, as such, might very well concern also people living in Poland. Maksymilian said:

> Well, I think that, and it will certainly sound a bit strange, maybe, someone may think that I'm a conceited person, but, actually I've never really understood most of my compatriots even when I lived in Poland. I definitely understand people from the same circle and people from, maybe let's say the same social class, I mean educated people … Probably the way I chose my friends made them finally quite homogenous from the point of view of their interests or the way they look at, or perceive the reality and these ways were pretty similar to mine. So I think that even in Poland I lived in a kind of cocoon and I perfectly understood people I frequented on a daily basis, and I didn't really understand the interests or reactions of most of my compatriots in Poland and this has not changed. I still do understand people from the same circle let's say, … people who are similar to me … and the rest I've never really understood. (Maksymilian)

The testimony of Kamil focused on the political issues discussed in the Polish media. As he admitted, some people in Poland could have the same perspective as he had:

> Do I understand? Yes, I think so … However, the whole process, which I could observe in the Polish public and political life spheres in the last decade, so starting from early years 2000s, I mean the orientation in which it goes, for me it's not completely comprehensible, especially taking into account the things which are getting most attention in the media … But this is not only for me, also for some people in Poland, they are just fed up with all this bullshit like you know, this crash in Smolensk or about the church all the time, or about the Pope and all these stupid affairs, like who killed whom. No, no, this I don't understand, but I suppose, this is not only the Polish case, it's a general tendency in the whole EU, where the media rather tend to focus on issues which are more events and scandal driven than anything else … And in Poland of course the weak public sphere, weak media, low quality of media, it adds to this overall picture. But fortunately, you have now Internet and you can find your own sources, portals, whatever, … where you can … actually get some quality information. (Kamil)

Laura expressed her lack of understanding of Poland in a pretty radical way:

> Totally different it is. I have very serious problems to talk to the Poles, as they, I think, perhaps I'm wrong, but I think this is [because of] indoctrination by the Polish press, public opinion and I, being outside, I know both [realities] and I can coin a more balanced view of it. Especially that I am in a very international environment and this is also a resultant of different mentalities. By contrast, in Poland, I think this is a hermetic circle and I have difficulty to find a common language, not only when it comes to political topics, but in general, on all topics. And with the people who once were very close to me, are educated and very open, we see the world in very different manners and we cannot come to terms. (Laura)

Overall, many interviewees admitted they understood their home country less since they had come to Belgium. The reasons for this phenomenon were diverse and related to, i.a.

"a wider perspective" gained by my interviewees since they had left Poland and the remoteness of the Polish affairs shaping the conversations and influencing the lifestyle of their friends and relatives. A different perspective could be related not only to their work and the distance from Polish affairs, but also to increased exposition to and stronger adherence to European integrationist ideology, as well as to ideas predominant among the EU officials and in the Western European media. In any case, their mental connection with Poland has started to fade away. In the same time, it is worth mentioning that many of the interviewees attached more importance to positive aspects of this separation resulting in a broader view and detachment from every-day Polish reality of which they sometimes had a critical view.

4.5.2.3. Would they come back to Poland?

Subsequently, I asked my interviewees how they would feel about coming back to Poland if their working and living conditions were to remain the same. The answers can be broadly divided into three categories.

The first type of answer is unconditional (or almost unconditional) "yes". Laura or Ula simply confirmed, without elaborating thereupon. Filip added that he "would move within a month or a week". Stanislaw explained briefly:

> I would do it. I'm open for Europe. I treat Europe as … a mother of regions. I think I'm universal enough, at the same time, patriotic enough, and it would be not a problem for me to go back to Poland, the same position, the same salary? Not a problem at all. (Stanislaw)

Beniamin said jokingly: "I would like to come back, because I think that girls are prettier there". Some other respondents gave a more elaborate and serious explanation. Emilia admitted: "I think it would be tempting". She further explained:

> It's nothing concrete and I'm sure that we would stay here for … another couple of years ... , but it's ... not only because of Belgium or not only because of the European Commission that I like or I want to be here. Maybe, if similar conditions were available in Poland, maybe I would go [back]. (Emilia)

The reasons she quoted referred to her lack of attachment to Belgium and even to the European institutions. Kamil and Ksawery provided a more "positive" motivation, explaining not that much why they were ready to leave Brussels, but rather why they would consider coming back to Poland. Ksawery said:

> Yes, I would like to go back to Poland, I never excluded this totally. On the contrary, with time, I see more and more value in coming back to Poland, not only value for me that I would capitalize on the experiences that I gain here in Brussels, and while working for the EU institutions but also the value that I can bring back to my country and to the society as a whole. (Ksawery)

Kamil quoted the same reason for him possibly coming back, but he elaborated more on the activist aspect of his motivation:

> Then, I would be in Poland already, if the salary and working conditions were considered the same, because I think there is still more to do for our generation in Poland than here. I mean, here the work is interesting and especially if you find something which you can do, and which is in accordance with your believes basically and in my case this is actually true. I work in the sector I really believe it should be developed, so it's not like I'm doing something what is against me, because of the working conditions and good salary, and stuff like that. But, at the same time … , I think, I'm more needed in Poland than here, plus I was always inclined into some kind of civil activity, so this is not so straightforward here, because the work is very much demanding and you don't have much time for anything else, plus the level of engagement that you can actually do here is not comparable with what you can do in Poland, I mean, you can engage here, and vote in some elections, you can be a member of some NGO, or club or whatever. But there is always this barrier, not of the language, but also of the cultural references which you don't get necessarily, which actually you will never get entirely, and … plus I like Poland as a country, maybe not the society very much, but Poland as a country is a nice place to live and yes, so if I have the possibility, I would certainly work there. It's not excluded that I would come back to Poland even if I don't have similar position as I have here. (Kamil)

Adrian and Darek assured that they were willing to come back even on slightly less favourable terms of employment. However, Darek, who left Poland as a child, was not interested in coming back to Poland permanently:

> I think that, perhaps even with slightly worse financial conditions, but I do not know if it would be forever. Certainly not forever, perhaps for a couple of years. For how many? Up to three-four years, as, frankly, I can't imagine myself in Poland after so many years abroad, perhaps even the surrounding is annoying to me, the neglected houses, streets. I would not like to live in a place, which resembles a ghetto, or some enclave of wealth, supposing my income would be the same. I assume I would be able to afford living in a nice neighbourhood, such as Wilanów or Mokotów,[187] but this is no real Poland, as whenever I go to Poland, I want to see the real Poland, not the touristic places, but what is beyond the curtain – and I do not like it, and I think I would not feel well in Poland with the income I have here, seeing that

[187] Districts of Warsaw.

> not everybody has it, and that they are far behind me [in terms of wealth]. While in Brussels, I do not feel rich. I feel like an ordinary working man, who has to work hard to buy a flat, after more than ten years. And I do not see the extreme poverty which is, unfortunately, visible in Poland. … I have never encountered anything like that here. And this distance seems too big in Poland, so independently of how much I would earn and wherever I would live, it wouldn't be rewarding, if, in parallel, I was seeing all these people, who would also like to, but they can't. But I would come back after I retire; I am already getting ready for that. (Darek)

Zofia, who had a foreign partner, was hesitant although leaning towards "yes". The doubts she quoted were not, however, directly linked to her partner:

> Well, that's very theoretical [laughter], so I'm not sure. To be honest, I don't know. At the beginning when I left Poland and for the first years I felt very much about not coming back, because I could see the bad sides of Poland and I could compare with other countries and there was more in the spirit of discovering, you know, the world and travelling and I have learned quite a lot, and I think if I have a good job in Poland and I would travel a lot, for the work and have contacts with people of different nationalities that could be something that could interest me. Maybe not now, maybe in a few years' time, maybe if I have kids one day, I would maybe like them to grow up in Poland, I don't know. Because I still think that - with the age you somehow feel a bit more connected to your roots, where the roots are, so maybe, when I'm older, I would like to go back. (Zofia)

The second category consists of those interviewees who would like to come back to Poland, but they would not do it because of an objective obstacle related to them being in couples with non-Polish people. This is, for instance, the case of Dominika:

> I would, but … I have a family, so I have to think about my husband's professional situation as well, so I don't think that coming back would be that easy. (Dominika)

Patrycja had a similar concern, but added that otherwise, she would be willing to come back:

> Because of my personal situation, I think it would be difficult, because my boyfriend is Italian and I don't know if he would like to come back to Poland with me. But maybe if the working conditions are there also with the same salary, and there is also possibility for him, then maybe yes. If I was single, I would definitely come back, at least to try for few years to see whether it is what I'm searching for. (Patrycja)

Aleksandra was slightly more optimistic about the possibility to come back to Poland, although she could not exclude other expatriation options:

> I think that option is always open. At the moment I haven't got a very clear idea of what the job would involve, but if there was an interesting offer, then I'm not tight to necessarily staying. At some point in the future it's an open thing, but because my husband isn't Polish, it's equally open that we'll go to his country. (Aleksandra)

Klara was actually quite enthusiastic about the idea to come back, but she noted objective problems concerning her husband's employment:

> Well, in my case, this is more like a family problem, as it would depend on whether my husband could work there. As far as I am concerned – absolutely yes. (Klara)

Finally, the last category includes those of my interviewees who answered negatively. However, the levels of certainty and motivations quoted varied. Some of them seemed to hesitate, like Otylia who spent most of her adult life abroad:

> Not any more. No, I am too well rooted [here], I have links, etc. There was a moment … it was one year ago, that I tried, more out of curiosity of what they offered than ... because I'd have had a problem if I'd been accepted, then I hindered it myself. The Information Office of the Parliament was opened in Wrocław, I am Wratislavian and then it suddenly came to my mind that perhaps I could ... It is just that it would have been a reverse situation; I would have had to come back here in my spare time. But there was such a moment [I admit]. (Otylia)

Bernard was not very categorical, but he raised a number of reasons related to his life in Belgium (and not to the institutions):

> Not necessarily. Not necessarily, because I would lose some aspects of my life that are specific to this city: international friends, it's better connected to other major cities. So not necessarily. I would have to really consider that then. Because it would mean changing my life once again and as I've said I'm pretty settled now. (Bernard)

Yet another interviewee, Jeremi, doubted about the probability of being offered the same conditions. Although he finally said he was planning to come back to Poland after the retirement, the negative tones were dominant in his answer:

> Well, the first thing is that I don't believe that [laughter] any company in Poland would offer me such money for what I'm doing right now. Of course, I'm not talking about, you know, calculations, like okay, "now I gain such amount of Euro, okay, multiple it by four and I want exactly the same amount of Złoty". But, you know, taking into account the prices, etc., for the moment – no. I don't like to change, I would say, my life too frequently. Now I live here for more than five years. I have a group of friends here, I'm thinking about, you know, settling myself up here, so changing it again … rather not. (Jeremi)

As he mentioned in the questionnaire he was considering going back to Poland, I insisted to know whether he had such plans for the future. He answered:

> Yes, yes, but what I had in mind, it was after my retirement, but it's again, for the moment. Because, you know, it's still, … [laughter], maybe 20 or 25 years from now, so the situation can change. I've always said to my friends, you know, if someone seven years ago would tell me that "Jeremi, you will leave your lovely work, you will leave your friends from work and you will move to another country to work in a strange organization, in a strange country, in a strange language", I would have told him, "come on, what are you telling me, it's not possible" … But you know, only few years passed and okay, I'm here. So, for the moment I'm saying yes, after retirement, I'm considering the return to Poland. (Jeremi)

Sebastian justified his preference for staying in Belgium, rather than for the reluctance to come back. However, his testimony cannot be qualified as enthusiastic:

> It's a very theoretical question. I came here because of professional reasons, right? So, it's inseparable. But, okay, if I wanted to go back, if I wanted to work in Poland, I could. I'm quite happy here, so I'm not, you know, in any way pushed to, I don't feel any need, pressure, anything. I don't want to. For the moment I think that I don't want to die here, but I hope that it's not going to happen tomorrow, so I don't need to worry for the nearest couple of weeks at least, I hope [laughter]. (Sebastian)

Maksymilian argued that he had already got accustomed to Brussels and was afraid of re-starting his life in his natal country. Strikingly, he had this fear despite the fact that both his family and his closest friends still lived in Poland:

> I don't think so. I mean, I got used to living in Brussels, I'm quite a conservative person, in the sense that I don't get used quite easily to a new environment and I don't like changes very much, and it cost me really a lot to start feeling more or less at home in Brussels. And I don't really feel like going back to Poland and to start my life again over there, even if, as I've said, my close friends are there. Well, these are like just a couple of people and …, honestly, I mean, I'm sure that things would not look similar, I mean, to the situation before I left Poland, and I think this would cost me again another effort to recreate kind of my own universe in Poland and feel at home, even if my parents, and my friends are there. I think it would be quite challenging … I mean, I could live in Poland again, but it's not that I would like to go there again and stay. (Maksymilian)

Maja formulated the reasons why she would not like to come back in a pretty direct manner:

> I do not think so, precisely because Poland seems to me too provincial, unfortunately. This is not about earnings, as this in not a decisive criterion for me. Unless I would find a job, different from the job I have, and unless it would be in a completely different part of Poland, then maybe so, but not like "coming back to Poland", but as a new experience, and that could be everywhere. (Maja)

Overall, the majority of the interviewees expressed their readiness to come back to Poland, should they have such a possibility without having to compromise on their lifestyle (even if for some, this would not be possible for family reasons). This group included also some of the interviewees who, based on other answers, seemed to be already well rooted in Belgium (e.g., Adrian, Filip, Stanislaw or Patrycja, who e.g., claimed that their best friends were now in Belgium). Also those who had come to Belgium many years before the enlargement were split: Laura was ready to come back, Otylia excluded such a possibility, while Maja would consider leaving Belgium, but not in the perspective of "coming back" to

Poland. This difference can be explained by their different experiences with integration in Belgium (for Laura it was a failure, while Otylia seemed to be well rooted) and with mobility (Otylia and Maja had moved several times in her life).

Although the exact nature of their supposed occupation in Poland was not mentioned (so they might assume that they would still work there to foster European integration), it is nevertheless worth noting that my interviewees did not explicitly refer to the ideological aspect of their job, did not say they would stay for Europe. Meanwhile, a couple of them mentioned possible benefits that Poland could get from them coming back to their motherland. On the other hand, it is interesting that those who said they did not want to come back, motivated it often by their reluctance to move and change their life, rather than by their preference for Brussels or by the lack of appeal of Poland.

4.5.3. Conclusions on transnationalism

To sum up, the links of my interviewees with Poland seem to be rather strong overall. Most maintain an important "tangible" connection with their home country through visiting it, regularly spending Easter and Christmas there, buying Polish services and products, and consuming Polish culture in Brussels. I have also come across (at "Wild Geese") economic links with Poland, such as acquisition of real estate in the home country. However, in the case of Polish EU officials, the importance of social networks in the home country (Hyvönen 2008) seems only to be moderate, as they admit that ties with friends are progressively weakening. Although their mental connection with Poland appears to become increasingly weak over time, with a lot of interviewees admitting that they were progressively losing their understanding of Poland (because of the distance, but also because of the "broader perspective" they were acquiring), most of them still seem ready to come back were it not for financial and professional issues.

This pattern confirms the opinion of Vertovec, according to which a certain degree of integration in a new country (in this case, in a specific segment of the population, namely EU officials and expatriates) can perfectly coexist with "the strongest senses of cohesion and belonging" remaining with the home country (2009:78). The widespread and frequent use of modern means of communication and frequent visits to Poland may illustrate Brettell's analysis, who argues that the development of means of transport and communication have "shortened the social distance between the sending and the receiving society" (2008:120; see also Castles and Miller 2003:47; Vertovec 1999:451- 452). Although today this may appear obvious, this observation is meaningful in the context of several decades of Polish migration to Belgium: things looked very different even at the beginning of the nineties.

Referring to the distinction between the bi-national and "cosmopolitan" type of transnationalism (Colic-Peisker 2006), my research does not permit me to come to a conclusion on this issue. On the one hand, Polish EU officials maintain very strong relations with their home country (and, in line with Favell (2008a), it is mostly with family and not so much with friends). On the other, they do not integrate into Belgian society, but instead into the community of EU officials which is, by definition, cosmopolitan.

4.6. Identification patterns

The commonality of symbols may form a basis for social identification as Poles and Europeans and as EU officials. In case of the EU officials, the symbols on the basis of which the community might be created are not national myths or cultural items, but an ideology of integration and the myth of de-nationalised, "supranational" pre-Europeans. The choice of symbols, their significance, and the intensity of attachment to these symbols vary from one individual to another. This concerns the understanding of both symbols related to their

national identification (such as language, history, tradition) and those related to their role in the construction of the integrated Europe.

4.6.1. Identification of Polish EU officials: different levels

Eriksen observes that Eastern European identity is typically built on the ethnic elements, often appealing to the criterion of blood (1997:254).

The analysis of the national self-image of the Polish EU officials should start – logically - with asking to all participants a basic question about their identification and subsequently elucidating the understanding of the very concept of Polishness by my interviewees: whether, in their view, it is related to their ancestors, their culture, or their choice. The question was also supposed to give a hint on their identification.

As to the first question, as much as four-fifth of my respondents indicated that they can be "very relevantly" described as "Poles" and nine out of ten remaining persons found this description "relevant". This is in line with an observation made by Eriksen on Western Europeans, according to which national belonging remains to many of them a "basic foundation of subjective identification" (1997:255).

Half of those, who did not consider the reference to Polishness as "very relevant", did not recognise any of the proposed qualifications as "very relevant" (neither did they attribute such qualifier to any other, non suggested category that they were free to propose). The others usually described themselves, in the first place, as European (four cases), Expat (three cases), Eurocrat (two cases), "World's citizen" (two cases) and Slav (one case).

The identification as a Pole was closely followed by the European identification: 29 persons out of 50 (almost three-fifth) found this description "very relevant" and further 20 persons found it "relevant". In the same time, none of my respondents qualified the Polish or European identification as "not relevant". The strong feeling of Europeanness is usually

associated with a strong link with Polishness: as much as 25 respondents enumerated both Europeanness and Polishness as very relevant for the description of their identification.

Much less respondents felt strongly about being Eurocrats: only seven persons found it "very relevant" and 13 - "relevant". On the other hand, only one-fifth considered this description "not relevant" at all, while 19 persons referred to it as "somewhat relevant". The persons describing themselves as Eurocrats (indication "very relevant") always gave the same status to Europeanness and usually also to their Polishness (five out of seven respondents). Thus, professional identification is strongly co-related with strong European, but also national identification.

After the most obvious identifications, such as those related to the nationality, Europeanness or the professional status, a relatively high number (50 percent) of the respondents identifies themselves by reference to their expatriate status. Eight respondents considered that they can be "very relevantly" described as "expats", while as much as 17 considered this description as "relevant". On the other hand, only seven respondents declined any relevance to this qualification.

Curiously, 11 persons considered the identification as a Slav "very relevant" and seven other persons found it "relevant". Eighteen respondents considered it "somewhat relevant" and only 11 persons rejected any affiliation to this qualification, finding it "not relevant". Contrary to what one might presume, being "Slav" by no means can be considered as remaining in the opposition to being "European", as those two qualifications often conjunct: as much as ten out of 11 persons who considered the description "Slav" as "very relevant" gave the same importance to being European.

Slightly more members of the research group adhered to a more universal identification: nine persons felt strongly about being "World's citizen" ("very relevant"),

while further ten persons acknowledged this description as “relevant”. However, 15 respondents felt it was “not relevant at all”.

Numerous internal migrations experienced by Poland in 20th century, the absence of a strong regional tradition, the relatively recent emergence of local self-government, as well as a relatively strong presence of persons with double nationality, often born or brought up abroad might have been among the reasons for the rather weak local or regional identification of my respondents. Eight respondents found themselves described in a “very relevant” manner by reference to the specific region of Poland from which they originated, while further 11 persons found this “relevant”. On the other hand, as much as 16 respondents found it “not relevant at all”.

Very few respondents used the possibility of introducing additional identifications. Only one person referred to the religious identification, two persons referred to their political convictions (“green”, “left wing liberal”).

There is a strong correlation between indications of Polishness and Europeanness, with only a few cases of mismatch. The Polish identity does not appear as a rival of the European one. Based on the Risse’s classification, multiple identities can be nested or cross-cutting (Risse 2004:251-252). On the basis of these answers to the initial question, it would be difficult to establish the relationship between the different identifications. Is Europeanness a corollary of Polishness or it is only concurrent? The overall strong prevalence of answers indicating European and Eurocrat identity seems to confirm the strong Europeanizing profile of my respondents.

4.6.2. Polishness

Several authors emphasize the role of the “myth of origins”, enabling the creation of a group identity based on an invented past (see e.g., Hobsbawm 1983; Eriksen 2010; Koczanowicz

2008). My research query on the approach of the Polish EU civil servants to their national identification can be roughly divided into two sub-questions. Firstly, I tried to understand the nature of the national tradition to which the Polish EU officials adhere. I found this question very important for a rather peripheral nation, torn apart between the European center and a more "nationalistic" tradition focusing on genuine ethnic features. Indeed, as Zubrzycki (2001) reminds us, there are different variants of Polishness "construed" on the basis of the attitude to religion, to certain founding myths and national symbols. The tension between these models has accentuated especially after the downfall of the communist dictatorship and the consequent shift to the West. The purpose of this part of the research is not to attempt any categorization, but rather to check whether their identitary references and the content of the collective imaginary of the Polish EU officials predisposes them to adopt a European identification. It is also important to understand what factors contributed to the formation of their identity (official "Polishness" shaped by the educational system?) and what was the influence of the "Europeanizing" ideas present in the official debate during the decade preceding the accession.

The second, more important, sub-question concerns the attitude of my respondents to their Polishness. What is their collective self-image? Do they need to embellish it, cultivating illusions? How strong is their national identification? Do they feel equal to other (Western) Europeans?

The notion of social identity includes both the elements of "sameness" and "distinctiveness" (Jacobson-Widding 1983). The element of "sameness" draws on experiences transmitted between generations and, in general, on national history (Marody 2003).

4.6.2.1. Important historical events

Having this in mind, I interrogated my respondents on the historical events they considered as the most important and on historical figures they appreciated most.

Firstly, it should be observed that the question on "important events" was apparently understood either as a question on objectively most decisive moments in the history of a nation or as the moments of "subjective" importance ("defining the world where I live now", "the ones that first came to my head", "these events shaped/made the Poland I was born in & know, the Poland that is my home country"). The latter group usually referred mostly to the events from the recent past or from the 20th century. The events quoted by respondents from this category were sometimes of clearly symbolic nature, such as "the Warsaw Uprising 1944", or "the events in Wujek [coal mine]", recalling the Polish Romantic tradition of "struggle and martyrdom". Other events, such as "the election of Pope John Paul II" or "the founding of Solidarność" also seem to be important mostly for the mindset of the respondents and people from their generation. The other group referred to events judged important because of their "objective" impact on the history of the nation. This approach transpires from the explanations of their choices, such as: "important for Polish culture and science" or "without this Poland could have not existed".

This dichotomy may partly be due to the lack of precision in the formulation of the question, but also reveals the attitude of my respondents to the Polish history. Indeed, it might be argued that the memory of historic events played a more important role in shaping the identity of those who gave a "subjective" interpretation to the question.

Five persons did not respond to the question. Out of the remaining 45, 25 persons considered the entry into the EU as one of the five most important events in the Polish history. However, even more respondents (32) indicated the regain of independence (also referred to as the "round table negotiations" or "the end of communism") in 1989 and

somewhat less mentioned the regain of independence of 1918 (also referred to as "the end of the 1st World War"). The latter is considered as a crucial date for the existence of the Polish nation-state, while the former can be considered as the date on which Poland became a democratic state of law it currently is, but also the date on which, symbolically, Poland ceased to be a satellite state of the Soviet Union. From this perspective, it can be considered as a necessary condition for the accession and the road to the accession started soon thereafter (with the Treaty of association signed only two years later). Some respondents who did not quote the accession of 2004, referred to the change in 1989, as they saw this date as the turning point after which Poland moved westwards, and of which the accession was only a logical consequence.

Those who referred to the independence of 1918 usually referred also to the events of 1989 or/and to the accession to the EU. Therefore, in the perception of my respondents, there is no opposition between the acknowledgement of importance of the Polish independence (nation state) and of the attachment to the Western values and institutions.

Curiously, only seven respondents referred to the accession to NATO, usually quoting it together with the accession to the EU. This low "popularity" of this event can be explained not only because of a relatively diminished role played by the military alliance these days and of the lack of imminent threat to Poland's security,[188] but also to the fact that the accession to NATO was seen as a symbolic rooting of Poland in the West and as such, it was somehow "consumed" by the later accession to the EU.

Some respondents quoted only the events that could be seen as positive, beneficial for Poland or the Poles – what might suggest that they understood the question as referring to positive events only. Nevertheless, slightly more than one fourth indicated the partition of Poland in the 18th century, while 21 persons referred to the World War II (although

[188] The research was conducted before the annexation of Crimea by Russia.

sometimes to "the end of the second World War", which, in Polish historiography, is associated with both positive (end of the carnage) and negative (beginning of the communist dictatorship and Soviet domination) aspects).

The Romantic tradition is also present, however, its manifestations are not always easy to identify and interpret. One could consider as romantic the references to the Warsaw Uprising or to the Battle of Vienna which have been considered as the moments of national glory or (in case of the Warsaw Uprising) of the national trauma, despite their rather relatively low impact on the history of Poland. However, it is difficult to judge if references to these events are indeed driven by a romantic vision of the Polish history or they are a simple repetition of stereotypes inculcated in the primary school, abstracted from any more general historical considerations.[189]

Another notable observation is the importance attached to the role of individuals, especially John Paul II. Almost one fourth of the respondents considered that his election was one of the most important events in the history of Poland. However, this cannot be seen as a manifestation of a strong attachment to the religion or to the Catholic Church, as the conviction of the importance of the Pope for the downfall of the communism is widespread in Poland, also among people with rather liberal views. The Pope has become an icon for both the liberal and the European part of the society (he was in favor of the accession of Poland to the EU) and the conservative Catholics (most of the upper ecclesiastic officials he appointed in Poland were very conservative). Several years after his death, at the moment I conducted my research, the informal self-censorship excluding any possible criticism with his regard was still respected in the mainstream public debate.[190]

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[189] In case of the Warsaw Uprising, there is also a third possibility: this event has also become, for some Poles both on the right and on the centre-left side of the Polish political spectrum, a strong anti-romantic symbol, associated with the absurd, suicidal hecatomb of the patriotic youth.

[190] However, very recently, the taboo related to any criticism of the Polish Pope seems to be melting. (see e.g., an interview with the former Polish jesuit priest, Stanislaw Obirek in *Le Soir* : http://archives.lesoir.be/%AB-l-image-d-un-catholicisme-exotique-%BB_t-20050404-

To sum up, the choices of my respondents show the importance they attach to the accession to the institutions of the Western World in general and to the European Union in particular. This is, nevertheless, accompanied by a strong national conscience. Their visions of the Polish history are broadly concurrent and bear a strong influence of the Polish education and the Polish public debate. In the same time, they seemed to be less infused with the romantic tradition that one could expect.

4.6.2.2. Important Polish historical figures

Not all respondents were able to name the Polish historical figures they appreciated most, a few of which openly stated there are no such figures.

The objective of the question was to identify the ideals of my respondents. Historic figures are national symbols. These symbols differ depending on the political and personal convictions, but most importantly, they may be indicative of the nature of one's identification, or, more precisely, the national myths and traditions one chooses to define Polishness.

One third of my respondents (from both groups) referred to Lech Wałęsa, the symbol of the democratic change of 1989 ("his role in transformation", "combat against the communism", "his strong willingness to bring democracy in Poland"). In the same time, he may be regarded as a symbol of egalitarianism and resourcefulness: a simple electrician outsmarting the generals and defeating the dictatorship ("even small ones can do big things", "one of the best examples how one person can change the world"); and symbolizes charismatic and efficient leadership, breaking a stereotype that many Poles have about

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Z0QFTD.html?query=Obirek&firstHit=0&by=10&sort=datedesc&when=-1&queryor=Obirek&pos=2&all=3&nav=1 ; http://archives.lesoir.be/parabole-sur-la-liberte-de-pensee-dans-la-pologne_t-20060527-005GHW.html?query=Obirek&firstHit=0&by=10&sort=datedesc&when=-1&queryor=Obirek&pos=0&all=3&nav=1).

themselves: the stereotype of impotent, inefficient people who always fall into a trap of the History ("he managed to mobilise masses", "politically efficient").

Surprisingly, only about one fourth of the respondents mentioned John Paul II. Indeed, although the Pope came second, this score cannot be regarded as particularly high among representatives of a society where he enjoys a genuine cult, shared by both conservative and liberal circles of the society. He has always (since 1989) been presented in the Polish media as the Polish national hero, his pilgrimages to Poland were re-transmitted by the public TV as great events. His "low" popularity among the Polish EU officials can be explained by the fact that many of them had lived abroad for many years, got acquainted with the criticism of his pontificate and they do not have the same perspective of the Pope which had been, to a certain extent, shaped by the press and the media in Poland. Those who chose John Paul II as one of the most appreciated historic figures, justified it e.g., by "his strong advocacy for good and equality", "his courage in change management" or by his "becoming one of the most influential people in the world and for all the good he did for Poland". These explanations are pretty general and rather similar to the statements about John Paul II which are widespread in the Polish media.

Other choices, although significantly less frequent, included the politicians representing the center and left-wing democratic opposition to the communist regime, notably Bronisław Geremek,[191] Jacek Kuroń,[192] Tadeusz Mazowiecki.[193] These choices were sometimes motivated with reference to the ideals of solidarity, compromise, open society and political activism ("peacefully putting a regime to sleep"; "their vision of Poland as an open, progressive society which has risen above its traditional national grievances"; "symbolizes

[191] A paramount figure of the Polish democratic opposition against the communist dictatorship and Member of the Polish Parliament 1989-2001, Minister of Foreign Affairs 1997-2000, Member of the European Parliament 2004-2008, dead in a car accident in 2008.
[192] A left-wing intellectual, the icon of the democratic opposition, active since the late 1950s, the founder of the Committee for the Defence of Workers in 1976.
[193] The first non-communist Prime Minister, a prominent figure of the democratic opposition before 1989.

the most respectable features of the Polish intelligentsia – altruism, courage and activism, but not suicidal self-sacrifice, idealism, but still very human and down-to-earth, insistency, but also ability to forgive and compromise").

The choice of Jagiellon Dynasty may be motivated (and – in one case - it explicitly was) by the fact that their rule is widely considered to be not only the "golden age" of the nation, but also the time of political inclusiveness, religious tolerance and ethnic diversity (the heritage of the multi-ethnic, tolerant Commonwealth is one of the national myths).

Other characters from the national pantheon of political figures that were mentioned include Leszek Balcerowicz[194] and Józef Piłsudski. One person quoted general Wojciech Jaruzelski – [195] still quite a provocative statement in the contemporary Poland.

Some respondents mentioned also artists (Chopin) and scholars or scientists: such as philosopher Leszek Kołakowski, Copernicus or – very often - Maria Skłodowska-Curie.

The pantheon of important Polish figures quoted by my respondents is not typical for the conservative, religious and "messianic" national tradition, but certain figures quoted, like John Paul II, Chopin, Copernicus and even Lech Wałęsa could be important symbols also for the Poles identifying with this tradition (but not exclusively for them). By contrast, Kołakowski, Skłodowska-Curie, Balcerowicz, Kuroń or Geremek could serve as a reference rather for the tradition emphasizing the "civic" heritage, more European, laic and progressive.

4.6.2.3. What does it mean to be Polish?

In the next step, I asked the interviewees about their understanding of Polishness. With this question, I mostly sought to find out if the understanding of Polishness by my interviewees was rather "civic", thus referring to the idea of an "open community" of people loyal to its institutions and adhering to its rules, or rather "ethnic", based on the concept of a "closed and

[194] The author of the liberal economic reforms in the years 1989-1991, paving the way from the centrally-steered economy to the free-market one.
[195] The strong man of the communist dictatorship in the years 1981-1989.

bounded organic social group", determined by its blood, culture, language, etc. (Jaskułowski 2012:185, 187). Is Polishness inborn or freely chosen? Or maybe it is something hybrid?

All of the interviewed officials felt Polish in one way or another and responded with reference to their own feeling of belonging. It appears that the "ethnic" understanding of Polishness prevailed. Those who adhered to this view in the most radical way referred to the concept of Polishness based on common ancestry, emphasizing that they were born Polish or that their parents where Polish:

> For me it's just who I am. I was born Polish, so I'm Polish. (Ula)
>
> Being a Pole is having Polish ancestors … . Someone who has got no Polish blood from one's ancestors, [he] may have the passport and the ID, but [he] is not fully Polish to me. (Darek)
>
> I feel Polish, because I have Polish parents. (Patrycja)

The majority saw their Polishness as something determined by their experience, the fact they were brought up in Poland, in the Polish culture, that they use the Polish language. Several interviewees answered using almost exactly the same words. For Dominika, Polishness was "the link with the Polish culture", Klara, Kamil and Emilia all referred to the language and the culture, sometimes associated with lifestyle, history, religion and "the whole set of values related to it". Sebastian developed slightly more on the issue, with a drop of sarcasm at the end:

> I think it is related to the culture in which you are socialized, so that's the whole story, … You're socialized in a certain culture, educated [in a certain culture]. First, the first thing that comes is the language you use. You cannot drop it, lose it ... Second, it's the all history you are learned, the values you are learned, associations you have, way of thinking, all those prejudices, everything ... . Polish language, knowing Polish culture, knowing Polish history, being a bit racist and anti-Semitic, altogether, being Polish. (Sebastian)

Also Zofia explained her understanding at length:

> What does it mean to be Polish? Well, I don't know. I think it's having been raised in a certain country within a certain culture and traditions that are [in this case] typical to Poland, that are neither better or worse than others, but this is just, you know, a Polish way of life, if I can say. It's also the language for me. You know, I think you perceive so many things through your education but also through the language and I think this is really unique to each language ... . I would definitely like (in the future) my children to speak Polish ... . Other than that, I don't know, I'm not too enthusiastic about Poland, I'm not too pessimistic, ... it's my country, so it's just a fact for me ... [laughter]. (Zofia)

Beniamin seemed to attach much importance to this identification:

> I feel Polish very much, but I'm not nationalist. In the sense that I really feel Polish, I'm proud of it, I'm proud of the history, of the culture. (Beniamin)

Adrian and Filip responded with reference to the same elements, but chose to clarify also the relation between this "ethnic set" and their feeling of Europeanness:

> I mean, the definition is very similar to the definition of Europeanness. This means that I was born in a certain cultural circle and this is a more narrow circle, identified mostly by means of the language, the common history and the common territory, but also by means of broadly conceived culture, meaning: culinary culture, film, art, the ... language. (Adrian)

> Again, this is a cultural aspect. I am Polish while also being European ... The Poles ... have common values with the Europeans, so they are Europeans, but they also have some specific attitudes, like: we like *bigos*[196] and *schabowy,*[197] we know that Marie Skłodowska-Curie was born in Poland and, in addition, that she was Skłodowska, not only Marie Curie, etc. So, yes, I am Polish. This is a set of common values and memories, etc. Which are not in contradiction to the set of values [we have] in common with the Frenchmen, the Spaniards, the Portuguese and the Belgians. (Filip)

> It is [something] in my roots, really. ... I'm sure that the way I sometimes behave or observe the world, it's all because of the way I was brought up in Poland, so the Polish culture and the Polish experience fit into that. (Aleksandra)

Maksymilian explained the concept mostly with regard to the common experience, introducing additional nuances as to the different types of Polishness:

> On the other hand, it is true that being a Pole implies, let's say, [having] certain type of experience, which means living and being born in Poland and growing up in this country. From this point of view, I suppose, that not all but many Poles ... may have certain similarities and ... perception of things and ways of thinking and maybe certain values. But again I think that in Poland there is nevertheless a huge row between what I would call elite ... in a broad sense of the word, and the rest of the society. I honestly think that the Polish intelligentsia, which means either educated people or people practicing certain lifestyle (which means they are people who are interested in the world, who read, who ... do not consume … the popular culture, and the masses), I think that this row is just enormous. (Maksymilian)

Aleksandra also emphasized the role of personal experience and clarified that in her case, the fact of living abroad could influence her Polishness, stressing the relational character of her identity:

> I've spent also a number of years abroad, [that is why my thinking, but also traditions are] not only purely Polish I suppose ... And being abroad, sometimes one becomes more patriotic, because being in Poland it's obvious that one does certain things, one does not have to think

[196] Polish dish similar to *la choucroute.*
[197] Polish pork breaded cutlet.

> about. Here, especially, when it comes to bringing up children, and wanting to pass on the culture, then one may put a bigger pressure on it to make sure that they understand what the culture is about. (Aleksandra)

Certain accounts, although clearly referred to Polishness in terms of culture, traditions or lifestyle, put emphasis on the actual practice, adding an element of what could be described as "Polishness as an attitude". Jeremi drew a particular importance to the awareness of the historical past, but also to the current interest in events in Poland:

> For me being Polish is, of course, to be interested in what's going on in Poland, to have knowledge about the current events in Poland, in business, in politics, etc. Just to still have interest in my country. Being Polish means to me, to be proud about what my country has achieved during the last 20 years. Well, being Polish means to me as well to go from time to time to Polish pubs to eat Polish food, to drink Polish beer and to meet with my Polish friends. Yeah, being Polish means as well, what's happened to my country during World War II and after, just to know history of my country. But for sure, being Polish doesn't mean that I feel that I am someone special. I don't believe that the history of my country means that I have special rights amongst other Europeans, but it doesn't mean as well that I feel worse than them. I just feel, you know, a citizen of a medium European country, not worse, not better than others, just European. (Jeremi)

It is unclear how the interviewee understood the question: his answer might be read as referring to obligations or implications of being Polish, rather than to the actual definition, although it might also be understood as defining Polishness as a specific attitude rather than as a set of characteristics. Also Stanislaw emphasized the role of practicing the national tradition: "it's important for me to practice Polish traditions to [remain] Polish, but again, those that I consider as positive."

On the other hand, some others seemed to conceive Polishness in more "civic" terms, considering it as a matter of choice, something one can choose or reject. In addition to his statements about the role of experience, Maksymilian also presented his understanding of Polishness from "the political point of view". For him, although the specific national experience determined the "initial" Polishness, it neither carved one's belonging forever, nor was it a necessary condition for it:

> It is something you can choose - in the sense that you can … choose to become a member of a community, and take the Polish citizenship and decide to be Pole. (Maksymilian)

A slightly different approach to the meaning of "being Polish" was presented by Ksawery, according to whom:

> Being Polish, it is first of all to declare my relationship with this country, with its nation, with its government, with its language, and also use the opportunities and rights that this passport gives me - like voting in the elections, and also openly discussing the important issues that are valid for my country, this is in the first place why I feel and how I feel Polish. (Ksawery).

Many accounts did not refer to any of the elements traditionally associated with a basis for national belonging. Some referred to their emotions, without attempting to explain where they come from. For Maja being Polish simply meant "something one is – independently of how one feels in a given moment". Her account referred to what might be qualified as "everyday Polishness", something referred to by Michael Billig (1995) as "banal nationalism" (see also Edensor 2002). As Maja explained,

> But I must say that after so many years abroad, in various circumstances, before the institutions and in the institutions, and in Italy (which is the third country and the third kind of circumstances in which I happened to live), I [still feel Polish]. Certainly I do not feel so patriotic as they write in newspapers, and I do not fit the models promoted by some political parties; however, for sure, being a Pole, is something from my past, but in a positive sense, as some kind of a catapult or some basis. And being a Pole, it is certainly being manifested ... , for instance, during a [football] match - I always support Poland – even against Italy [laughter] (as Italy is my second homeland). I certainly understand a "fanatic" approach of certain countries, as we are a bit special in Poland, and this specificity, we are keen on it. And I understand it, although I do not have inclinations to this specificity. (Maja)

Bernard gave an impression of indifference, quoting the fact of living outside Poland as a factor alienating them from their home country:

> I am [Polish], but not to the fullest extent, because I don't know my home city that well any more. Because I do not go there that often. Because I don't follow the news, because I don't have that many Polish friends, because I do not feel concerned about the latest governmental decisions, so it's hard for me to say that I'm Polish in that respect. (Bernard)

Laura seemed to consider her Polishness as something accessory: "I feel rather European, but in one way or another, I try to cultivate my Polishness, as I find it enriching." For her, "Polishness" was something that in fact "complemented her" as she found Poles "so distinct from the others". However, Laura also argued that being a Pole for her was "certainly not the lifestyle", as she "did not cook, or ... did not, in particular, behave as a Polish person and

[she] had never had". She even added that "for many years [she] could have done virtually without the Polish language".

Certain Polish EU officials quoted the fact that they were born in Poland as decisive. However, if some of them, as for instance Patrycja, seemed to use it as a proxy for being impregnated with the Polish culture, ("I feel Polish, because … I was born in Poland and I lived most of my life there"), some others saw it as a proof of small importance of the national belonging:

> This is the place of birth and this is what my daughter made me realize. She has three nationalities and they are all, if I can say, justified, as she is born in Poland from a Polish mother and a German father and she lives, since she was born, in Belgium and she got her education in Belgium. However, when she has to answer with one word who she is, she says she is Polish, as she was born in Poland. And I guess that's it. That is why I will never accept that people are proud of their origins, as it is only an accident which makes that we are born there and not in another place, while we can be proud with all the rest, what we do with it. (Otylia).

4.6.2.4. Polish national features

The question was important to complete the analysis of the element of "sameness" (Jacobson-Widding 1983). I wanted to know what exactly the Polish EU officials thought they had in common with other Poles and what their self-image was.

Inquired about the national features they could ascribe to Polish people, overall, almost 40 percent of the respondents (out of the 48 persons)[198] considered that Poles were hard-working people. This was, by far, the most popular indication. It is difficult to judge to what extent this opinion was influenced by the situation of Brussels, where the economic migrants are often referred to by the local population as particularly laborious. On the other hand, the Polish press and media repeatedly published/broadcasted information on the statistics of the average working time in Poland which is, reportedly, among the highest in Europe. The impact of this information and of this judgment is probably strengthened by the fact that, in

[198] Two persons did not answer the question, although some respondents gave less than three characteristics and some other more than three.

the past, there was a widespread conviction in the Polish society that Poles were considered lazy in Germany, where many of them worked. Therefore, the contrary judgment by the Brussels population, as well as all kinds of statistics falsifying this negative stereotype[199] may have been well remembered and has apparently strongly influenced the declared self-image of the Polish EU officials.

The next most often appearing features were "proud", "capable/resourceful" and "traditional/conservative" - more than 16 percent of the respondents gave this answer. The second feature corresponds to the well-rooted conviction of the Poles about themselves, fortified during the years of the communism when this characteristic was particularly positively valued. The popularity of the third feature mentioned may be interpreted in the context of the cultural change slowly taking place in Poland where the reaction of the conservative part of the population is very strong and noticeable. Actually, any reader of Polish electronic media is confronted, on a daily basis, with the affirmation of the traditional values, usually associated with pestering against any perceived "leftists" or "communists", gays, feminists, "gender ideology", etc. On the other hand, both Western and Polish media emphasize the conservativeness and traditionalism of the Polish society.[200]

The other features quoted can be roughly divided into "positive" and negative" on the basis of semantic connotations widely associated with the words at stake. Thus, the Polish EU officials see the Poles as "hospitable" (slightly below 15 percent), as well as "adaptable", "friendly" and "cheerful". Several respondents emphasized "the Polish sense of entrepreneurship", "openness" and "ambition".

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[199] See examples of articles referring to OECD and Eurostat statistics: http://www.polskieradio.pl/10/3959/Artykul/1450487,Polacy-w-czolowce-najciezej-pracujacych-narodow; http://superbiz.se.pl/wiadomosci-biz/polak-pracuje-425-godziny-tygodniowo-wyprzedzaja-nas-tylko-grecy_591752.html

[200] see e.g., http://wyborcza.pl/1,75398,18219100,Polacy_za_panstwem_opiekunczym_i_konserwatywnym__59.html?disableRedirects=true

On the other hand, slightly below 15 percent admitted that the Poles have "a tendency to complain", which is another well-rooted conviction that the Poles maintain about themselves. Several respondents indicated that the Poles have "a low self-esteem" and that they "tend to be intolerant" or "xenophobic". Other negative features included "being envious/jealous" and "distrustful": again, the tendency to envy other people, especially other Poles, is among the "traditional" set of features belonging to the negative Polish self-image. A couple of respondents indicated that their compatriots are "unruly", "quarrelsome" and "irrationally courageous".

Finally, the characteristics quoted which can be considered neutral included "religiousness" (relatively high number of quotations) and "stubbornness".

Although the features quoted by my respondents were mostly concurrent with the stereotypical characterizations popular in Poland, they were neither particularly negative nor positive. There was no clear tendency to idealize Polishness, or to present it as a shameful burden. Negative or neutral features heavily relied on bearded stereotypes (quarrelsome, religious, envious, etc.). By contrast, among the positive features quoted, one finds opinions that Poles have forged about themselves during the last 20 years of economic transformation and vigorous development.

4.6.2.5. Polish traditions and ways of maintenance of Polishness

Subsequently, to obtain a better insight into the relations between the Polishness (as understood by my interviewees) and the cultural practice, I inquired about the importance of practicing the Polish traditions for "remaining Polish".

Only five out of 21 interviewees did not find practicing Polish traditions important to remain Polish. One person found it important, although, as she said, "in a moderate way" (Otylia).

Most of those who found it important (for example Zofia, Ula, Ksawery and Filip) referred to religious celebrations, such as Christmas and Easter, but not necessarily to their strictly religious character:

> Yeah, I think it is [important]. Not all the traditions and not too heavily, but celebrating Christmas or Easter in Polish way with certain traditional food, that's quite important. I don't follow necessarily all the calendars, so I don't always know when there is *Tłusty Czwartek*[201] or, you know, *Andrzejki*[202], I do not sometimes notice this [laughter]. But big celebrations, yeah, definitely. (Zofia)

> This is part of my culture and I believe being Polish also means understanding the tradition and following the tradition despite the fact that we're here in Belgium and in Brussels where those traditions are not the same. (Ksawery)

> Yes, although I do not know what exactly you understand under "Polish tradition", but there are different things from Poland that I am used to, [such as] eating *schabowy*[203] and … the Morning Resurrection mass during the Easter; here in Belgium, people would not go for Resurrection. (Filip)

Some of the interviewees emphasized the religious aspect of the tradition, together with its distinctively Polish character:

> I'm Catholic, so, as you know, in Poland on Fridays … it's forbidden to eat meat for Catholics, but, maybe you don't know it. It's a rule said by the Polish Episcopate and it's not enforced here in Belgium, but I decided to keep this …, well it's a tradition. (Jeremi)

Some others, although aware of the religious origin of some Polish traditions, tended to dissociate their practice from the question of faith:

> I'm Christian, but I don't go to the church ... Whenever … we have Christian celebrations, like Easter or … Christmas, then I always go to Poland, so I don't have to do anything in fact. So these customs, events are very important. (Beniamin)

> Yes, I have the impression I do [find it important to practice Polish traditions to "remain" Polish]. I must admit I have never spent such feasts as Christmas or Easter outside Poland … Certainly, I am very happy that there are such traditions as, I don't know, blessing food, which are very Polish and very interesting (independently from the religious aspect of it, as this is a topic apart). So is sharing the wafer during the Polish meetings which can be separated from religious devotion. It is more a question of practicing popular traditions rather than religion as such, but I believe that practicing it is very important and I am sure I will do it. (Adrian)

Many admitted to go for these events back to Poland, to spend that time with family and friends. For instance, Kamil said:

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[201] Fat Thursday.
[202] Saint Andrew's Day.
[203] Polish pork breaded cutlet.

> I always go to Poland for those kind of things, so I don't maintain them here, but I assume by going to Poland to celebrate them somehow. This is how I maintain them. Even though for me, it's an occasion rather to meet with family and friends, than to respect some … traditions. (Kamil)

Those having children found maintaining and transmitting traditions to the younger generation especially important:

> Very much. Especially that my children have two nationalities and I am very keen on them learning Polish, so as to transmit Polish tradition, definitely. (Klara)

> Yeah. We have very often Polish food at home and I speak Polish to my kids as well. (Dominika)

> Yes, I mean, well, I pick and choose the traditions that I like or that I'm able to continue, but definitely it's important for me that my husband who is not Polish speaks Polish, that my child finds out as much about the culture to be able when they grow older, so yes, it's important. (Aleksandra)

Some interviewees admitted they were practicing Polish traditions, but dissociated it from any attempt to "stay Polish", explaining it by the attachment to their childhood or simply by their taste for these traditions, independently from their Polish character:

> This is important to me rather from a private point of view, to remain my mummy's child and to keep continuity with my childhood and my family and, for sure … also with Poland. (Maja)

> No, it is not important to me to do it in the sense that I don't think that I should be doing it in order to stay Polish, but of course, I mean, there are certain traditions which I inherited after my parents and which I practiced when I was a kid, and these are traditions that I simply like…, so I practice them. (Maksymilian)

> Yes, yes, but I would say that it's not that we have to practice really the Polish traditions. It's not the stress that it's so Polish. Just the traditions that we know so we practice them. My attitude is that I find it important to practice traditions in general, so for example for Christmas or for Easter it is important for me to celebrate these events the way that I was celebrating them as a child and so on. So I want to teach my kids to do the same, I want them to have the same experience as for traditions. But it doesn't mean that it's because it's Polish. It's just because it is a tradition that I think is worth keeping. (Emilia)

Although for Laura, in general, practicing Polish traditions was not important to remain Polish, she added:

> I mean, [except for] those which I like the most, like Christmas, which is completely different. For me, it has a very special taste, even though I am not religious or very tradition-oriented but this is something so unique and so full of charm that yes, gladly. But this is on the basis of choice, and not ideology. (Laura)

Those who, similarly as Laura, claimed that they did not consider practicing traditions as important to remain Polish either did not explain their stance (Sebastian: "No, absolutely not") or argued that they did not need to act in a specific manner, as they were born Polish. These were the same respondents who viewed their Polishness as something related to the blood or the place of birth, denying the importance of the cultural aspect of it:

> Not for me, because I'm naturally Polish because of the fact my both parents are Polish and I was born in Poland, so the fact that I'm not eating Polish food everyday, doesn't make me feel foreigner, so I'm fine with it, but maybe in the long term, I don't know, maybe it will be more important. (Patrycja)

Darek opposed the real, fixed character of his identity based on ancestry to the "constructed" cultural aspects of Polishness:

> No, all of this is not important at all. I am not at all interested in some national feasts, celebrations, the grave of the Unknown Soldier, or the 3rd May, all this is unimportant for me, as far as Polishness is concerned, as this is a creation of the establishment and of the whole culture. I am a Pole because of my ancestors who were Poles and have lived there for a thousand years, they lived, they died and no one can tell me that I am not a Pole or [that I am] a worse Pole because I, say, do not pray in the church, if this is the part of the culture, or, … do not celebrate some national feasts because this is all artificial, constructed and this can change, as the feasts and the political orientations. (Darek)

Bernard went even further:

> And tradition, it doesn't mean anything to me. There are not that many Polish traditions and not that different. There is nothing I observe. And there is nothing to observe that much, what are these traditions specific to Poles? (Bernard)

Overall, the majority of my interviewees do practice Polish traditions and find it important to continue. However, they quoted also other motivations: some of them liked the related rituals and habits, without seeing them necessarily as important for their Polishness.

During my research, I attended numerous gatherings of Polish EU officials celebrating important Polish events or feasts. For instance, in November 2011, I participated in the celebration of St. Andrew's Day in the "Wild Geese", where the Polish EU officials, together with other Polish expats, practiced the tradition of reading the future from the forms taken by hot wax coagulating in cold water. The event was very popular, there were many people pouring the wax in turns. However, the purpose of the fortune telling was to read the future of

Europe. One of the EU officials interpreted the wax form as imminent disruption of the European Union, or at least a split of the UK.

4.6.2.6. Feeling European versus feeling Polish

As it can be concluded from the above, my interviewees have mostly kept their Polishness, while developing in parallel the feeling of being European. It is not uncommon that individuals have multiple social identities, the European one being one of them (Risse 2004:253). I could presume that these belongings must coexist, becoming more or less salient, depending on the context (see e.g., Jenkins 2002; Herrman and Brewer 2004). Indeed, Eugeen E. Roosens stresses the changeable and contextual character of the hierarchy of identities (1989:15-16). Richard Jenkins argues that identity depends on the context, and adds that often, it is closely related to a possible advantage (2002:121-122); whereas Stuart Hall acknowledges its "strategic and positional" character (1996:3-4). Likewise, Thomas Hylland Eriksen stresses that social identities are "fluid, negotiable, situational, analogic (or gradualist) and segmentary" and may contain several degrees of belonging (2010:214-215). Herrmann and Brewer specify that the preponderance of one belonging or another depends on the circumstances and give example of Europeans feeling more European in America (2004:4).

In case of my respondents, European identification seemed to be related to their intercultural experience, as well as to their professional life, while the feeling of Polishness appears strongly related to the practice of certain traditions. In order to explore this situational aspect of identification further, I interrogated my respondents (via questionnaires) whether there were moments when they felt more European and moments when they felt more Polish.

A number of persons indicated that it is impossible for them to make a clear distinction between the Polish and the European identity and that these two identities are interrelated ("I feel a Pole, Poland is part of the EU and so to this extend I feel European"; "it is impossible to be only European (not Polish) or only Polish (not European)").

Only two persons felt always more European (one of them being only half Polish) than Polish, a couple of respondents felt always more Polish or even exclusively Polish (two persons). However, the majority felt in certain situations more Polish and in some others - more European. Certain answers were recurrent: many felt more European either in Poland or outside Europe: in these situations they probably feel they represent Europe ("possibly European when I am on another continent and nobody knows where Poland is"). Another frequent answer was that a respondent felt more European in the professional context. Finally, certain respondents felt strongly their European belonging in the situations of conflict: "when I am confronted with Polish people criticizing the Commission or the Union, I tend to feel solidarity with other EU officials and the Union"; "when I'm in Poland, during some discussions I have a more distant point of view, so I feel more European"; "when one is attacked by the other I feel more the first one". Some respondents also indicated that they felt European in most of situations of the daily life.

Feeling more Polish, is often related to situations of national drama (Smolensk air crash of the presidential plane had taken place quite shortly before, death of the Pope) or, on the contrary, important, but joyful events, such as the election of Jerzy Buzek for the post of the speaker of the European Parliament. Some respondents underlined their strong sensation of Polishness while celebrating Polish traditions ("Polish traditions - I feel more Polish. Otherwise - I feel European"). Moreover, many respondents admitted they felt more Polish in situations involving foreigners or being outside Poland, especially in case Poland is criticised.

One person remarked she felt particularly strongly Polish when she could oppose the communist dictatorship experience to the allegedly leftist sympathies of Western Europeans.

As the catastrophe of the presidential plane was relatively recent and regularly reminded in the Polish political debate (as well as by the Polish EU officials, notably on the "EPS" list), I asked the respondents whether they felt any particular link with other Poles after the tragic event. Only ten out of 50 respondents denied that they felt particularly linked with other Poles at the moment of the Smolensk tragedy. Some flatly answered "no", some others felt necessary to explain that they considered the event as very sad or traumatising but it did not provoke a particular feeling of unity with other Poles:

> I felt a general grief for people who died and especially some of them that I knew personally. I cannot see any link with grief and nationality. I think this is a supranational feeling. One mourns and is sorry for the tragedy in general and mourning is a private emotion deprived for me from any national (nationalistic) contexts.
>
> Not really, I was just very sorry about the tragedy.
>
> Not really, it was shock for all of us.

Some of those who confirmed their particular link with other Poles tried to minimize their emotional involvement: "Initially yes, but when the mass hysteria started I felt ashamed of being Polish"; "Yes, however, I was not participating in any public 'Brussels show-off' of the grieve, as I found it exaggerated"; "Only a short while, the time of a real grieve, then it became more dividing than unifying"; "Yes, for a short while, but then this event rapidly gave rise to very deep divisions and acrimonious arguments". Many others tried to give an additional explanation. Some underlined the fact that they were in Poland in that time, whereas some others tried to downplay the national character of the tragedy, emphasizing its human dimension.

The opinion on the origin of the Smolensk crash has become the vector of political division in Poland. This research does not concern this issue. Based on the answers, it might only be concluded that the death of the 96 people including the President of Poland visibly

constituted a very strong community experience.[204] This experience could be even underreported, given that the right wing of the Polish political scene defines itself, to a significant extent, by their lasting grief after the Smolensk crash. For this reason, some of my respondents, especially those with more left-wing or centrist political views, could choose not to recount or simply not remember their emotions after the crash, by fear of amalgamation with this political camp.

4.6.2.7. The past and present performance of the Poles in different domains

As every national identification, the Polish one certainly relies on certain common myths, common symbols and emblems, but also certain vision of common past. People working in multinational environment, "united in diversity" for the common European interest, must have inevitably asked themselves a question on the actual past contribution of Poles to the common scientific and cultural European heritage. To the extent that the feeling of Europeanness is a corollary of their sense of Polishness (as it was suggested in many responses), the judgment on the common Polish past in the context of the European past may reveal something about how confident my respondents feel in Europe with their Polish identification and how they position themselves in the entanglement of national and supranational identifications. With the following set of questions, I tried, for the reasons explained above, to make my respondents assess the past and present performance of the Poles, adding to my understanding of their attitude to the Polishness.

Interrogated over the contribution of the Poles to the European heritage, 20 out of 45 persons[205] gave a rather negative answer, considering the Polish contribution inadequate to the country's size. A few respondents more answered affirmatively, claiming that the Polish

[204] For an interesting analysis of these and subsequent events, see: Jaskułowski (2012).
[205] Five respondents did not answer the question.

contribution was undoubtedly important or at least as important as the contribution of the other nations.

Interestingly, only a limited number of respondents (7) named any examples of important contributors except for Chopin (13 respondents), Maria Skłodowska-Curie (14 respondents) or Kopernik (Nicolaus Copernicus): a rather standard selection typically learnt already at a primary school, but having a merit of being of truly European notoriety. A few people mentioned Lech Wałęsa, John Paul II, (Joseph) Conrad-Korzeniowski or Józef Piłsudski. One person mentioned Magdalena Abakanowicz,[206] Jerzy Nowosielski,[207] Krzysztof Warlikowski.[208] Another person enumerated a handful of writers, musicians, scholars and scientists (the only quotation of scientists other than Maria Skłodowska-Curie): Paweł Włodkowic, Jan Łukasiewicz, Stefan Banach, Wróblewski/Olszewski, Ignacy Jan Paderewski, Krzysztof Penderecki, Leszek Kołakowski, Zygmunt Bauman, Alfred Tarski.

Nobody mentioned Adam Mickiewicz and Juliusz Słowacki, the "heavy weights" of the Polish Romanticism, who traditionally have been mentioned in this context, despite being rather unknown to the wider public outside Poland.

Skłodowska-Curie and Chopin were mentioned not only by those respondents who claimed that Poland had much contributed to the EU heritage, but also by those who claimed the contrary:

> Even if "we had" Chopin or Skłodowska, these are only outstanding individuals, there were not many Polish schools or movements of art, literature or music or significant scientific centres which brought much into the European heritage.

Those who considered that Poles contributed substantially often deplored a rather low notoriety of the Polish artists and scientists abroad (e.g., "However it is not widely recognized. Especially the scientific aspect seems to be neglected"). Those who made the opposite judgment referred sometimes to the reasons for what they considered as

[206] A sculptor and fiber artist.
[207] A painter, graphic artist, stenographer, and illustrator.
[208] A theater director.

underperformance ("taking into account that Poland was 'no country' for more than 120 years and a lot of Polish inventors, scientists and artists were just citizens of other European countries").

Interrogated about their assessment of Polish achievements in various domains, almost 80 percent of my respondents valued high the economic achievements of Poland, that they considered as "very important" (17 respondents) or "important" (22 respondents), while only two respondents were of the opposite opinion. Polish EU officials praised also the cultural achievements of Poland: 35 respondents considered them, altogether, as very important (8) or important (27), while only two persons found them unimportant. Only slightly less enthusiastic was the assessment of the political importance of Poland: 31 respondents considered it as "very important" (7) or "important" (24), while three found it unimportant.

The assessment of scientific and technological advancement of Poland was much more moderate. Nine persons found it "unimportant", while only eight and nine respondents considered it, respectively, "very important" or "important". The worst notes were distributed for the Polish performance in sport, with almost as much of those who found it "unimportant" (15) as those who found it either "very important" (two) or "important" (15). A few persons referred to other very important achievements, notably in the field of "social development" or "social self-consciousness".[209]

Subsequently, I asked my respondents if there were any aspects in contemporary Poland, which they felt ashamed of as Poles, followed by a question whether they happened to criticize Poland or the Poles as a nation while talking to other Europeans.

[209] However, it should be borne in mind that the question was formulated in a quite imprecise manner and some respondents could have understood it not as valuation of the performance of Poland in the proposed fields, but as the assessment of one's individual attitude to the achievements in these areas. In other terms, while putting "very important" in the column "culture", respondents could have meant that they assessed the Polish achievements in this field as outstanding or that they attached a lot of importance to achievements in this field, although their assessment of the Polish performance in this discipline could be actually low.

Eighteen out of 50 participants were not ashamed of anything in Poland. This, of course, cannot be understood as denying any negative aspect of Poland and Polishness. It may simply mean that the respondents do not identify themselves with Poland sufficiently to feel ashamed of anything related to it, but also that they do not feel responsible for these negative aspects and thus do not feel ashamed. Finally, some respondents explained that "there is nothing you would not find in other countries too" or that "the more you know about other nations, the easier you see that there is nothing to be ashamed of", relativising potentially negative aspects by comparison with other countries.

Those research participants who admitted they were ashamed of certain aspects of the contemporary Poland, focused mostly on the political issues. As much as 12 officials (out of 32 who were ashamed of certain aspects) referred to bad quality of politics in Poland, stigmatizing mostly strong political division (notably strengthened by the quarrel over the responsibility for the presidential airplane crash in Smolensk), aggressive and non-constructive nature of the political debate and the lack of competence of the Polish politicians. The issue of the influence of the Catholic Church on the public issues in Poland deserves a separate mention: as much as seven persons complained about this fact. Finally, 11 respondents were ashamed of the Polish intolerance, also described as xenophobia, homophobia or anti-Semitism.

Very few respondents referred to the economic aspects, such as "decreasing wages" or "young people agreeing to junk jobs". A few persons criticised, in more general terms, backwardness or excessive traditionalism or narrow-mindedness of the Polish society.

Only 11 out of 50 research participants strongly denied that they ever criticize Poland or the Poles while talking to other Europeans. Some of them added explanation for this, such as: "I tend to give a good opinion about my compatriots"; "there are enough bad opinions about Poles, I don't want to contribute to that". Some others were less categorical and

admitted that it happens sometimes, although they tended to minimize the incidence and the scope of such criticism: “Yes, but just political issues”; “Generally, no, although sometimes, after events on the political scene”; “Not really, maybe in a way of comparing the national special features”; “yes it happens but I do it more mildly than when I talk to other Poles”; “very seldom I criticize Poland or the Poles. Most often it concerns Polish politics and not society in general”; “Yes, but only when I am sure, when something is obvious and when I am asked. I am trying to avoid such debates with other nationals”; “only in private conversations with friends”; “Yes, but always in a moderate way and, frankly, I don’t let others do it easily in my presence always trying to remind the context of our past and our difficult geopolitical position”; “Possibly only about the xenophobia”. Finally, around two-fifth of the respondents answered affirmatively without additional reservations. Some of them added explanations for this position: “of course, sometimes it’s objectively necessary”; “yes, because although the idea of a big and important nation is deeply rooted, the independence of thoughts and opinions does not follow”; “Of course. If I consider something deplorable, I do not think it serves any purpose to remain silent only because it concerns Poland. Firstly, if more people criticize it, it is more likely to change, secondly, I would lose personal credibility if I do not try to be fair. [Thirdly], if everybody defends one’s “nest” only for nationalistic reasons, no genuine dialogue is possible. Finally, nations which are able to look critically on their own past are better considered than those who keep denying any wrongdoing”; “Only mature nations can be critical of themselves. I talk (when there is a need) critically about myself as a Pole and my fellow countrymen/countrywomen. We are not perfect and I hate when we sound “pompous” when we talk about Poland. We need to get some distance to ourselves and our country”.

A lot of respondents made a reservation that they criticized mainly the politics and the politicians. Certainly, this kind of criticism must appear less stigmatizing than discussions about, for example, Polish anti-Semitism or inclination to heavy drinking.

4.6.2.8. Attachment to Poland and different aspects of Polishness

At the last step, I asked the research participants to evaluate the degree of their attachment to different things related to Poland. By far, the dearest to the Polish EU officials proved to be the Polish language. Thirty-four out of 50 respondents indicated they were "very attached" to it, while all the rest admitted they were "attached" to it. The overall attachment to the Polish nation, Polish high culture, Polish history and tradition was significantly lower. Still, only one person indicated "no attache[ment] at all" to the Polish nation to Polish high culture or Polish history and the majority considered itself either "attached" or "very attached", while only two persons were "not at all attached" to the Polish tradition. These findings seem to confirm the observation made by Marody and Mandes, according to whom, Polish national identity is based on language and religion (2005:61) and not on political factors.

Much lower "score" was registered by the Polish landscape, while the lowest attachment was claimed with regard to the Polish national ceremonies and Polish popular culture. For example, in case of Polish national ceremonies, as many as seven persons stated they were not attached to them at all. However, 18 persons said they were either "attached" or "very attached" to national ceremonies and 20 persons were "attached" or "very attached" to the Polish popular culture (while ten were "not attached at all").

4.6.3. Europeanness

While researching on the European identity of the Polish EU officials, I started by elucidating what "being European" means to them. As a result, I obtained information on whether they

feel European and how they understood it. To complement the picture, I inquired about what the Polish EU civil servants consider as European values and what distinctive features they have in common. Once it was possible to establish how they understand their Europeanness, I tried to examine how the fact of working in the EU institutions, with their ideology and pragmatics, influenced their identification.

I also found it important to verify if they considered themselves as the European avant-garde, the pre-figuration of the European nation, as they are often presented in the scholarly literature, thus whether they saw themselves as more European than average people in Belgium or in Poland. I continued gathering data on the relation between their status and their identification by asking whether they had become more European since they had started working in the EU institutions. Subsequently, I asked them if their job required pro-European attitude and if they felt that their work had a tangible impact. I also asked them a more general question on how they understood the European integration.

Finally, I inquired on their understanding of their Polishness in the context of their European identification, via a question whether Poles are more or less European than Belgians or other Western Europeans.

Certain questions asked during the interview, as for instance the last one, were not formulated exactly so as to target the response I intended to obtain. Their slightly provocative, sometimes somewhat simplistic formulations were intended to trigger spontaneous reactions. Obviously, the very notions of “European” or “Europeanness” could be, and indeed were, understood differently: as conscious political subscription or a total of objective cultural features. This ambiguity was not always possible to eliminate and, in this particular case, could provide me with additional information on the intuitive understanding of the concept by my interlocutors.

4.6.3.1. Being European: inborn or chosen?

Abélès and his colleagues draw attention to frequent situations of particularly European predilection among the EU officials who happen to be born in mixed couples or from parents who are Community officials or who have been living in culturally mixed or "europeanising" environments (1993:16). However, such situations must be less frequent among Poles who lived in a relative isolation from other EU member states, not only because Poland was not yet in the European Union, but also because of the "Iron Curtain".

Interrogated on the meaning of "being European", only six out of 21 interviewees clearly declared they were born European, while as much as ten others suggested that Europeanness is a question of choice, something acquired, developed or gained with upbringing in certain culture. Several persons did not clearly answer the question on whether Europeanness is inborn or chosen, limiting themselves to defining themselves *vis à vis* this concept. Some others did not choose between "birth" and "choice", but proposed other considerations on this subject, often reflected in academic writing. Importantly, some of the interviewees emphasized the importance of making distinction between Europe as a continent and Europe in the context of European Union (Klara, Aleksandra).

Some of those who considered being European as a question of birth stressed that although they were not born as Europeans, their children certainly are (e.g., Ula, Maja). As Ula puts it:

> Well, I was not born with it [laughter]. It was a long time ago, so it's different. I would say, my daughters were born Europeans, because this will be the attitude nowadays. I think we still learn. For us it's not that difficult, for my generation ... We had to adjust and it was nice, because we know times, our parents told us how it was before, we were not Europeans, … I mean we were, but not like today, not mentally just on the map. I think we become Europeans, we learn how to be Europeans, but our children will be Europeans, I guess. (Ula)

Likewise, Maja stated: "some day, people will be born with it. Perhaps they are already being born with it". Furthermore, children from mixed couples were seen as even more "advantaged" as regards being born European. Moreover, Kamil suggested that "maybe, if

you are born in Brussels out of two Eurocrats, then you feel European from the very beginning".

The abovementioned responses are characterised by a conviction that "Europeanness" is a particular feature which one can aquire or be born with in the particular circumstances. Although they were not specific about the nature of these circumstances, it may be inferred from their statements that this is related to the integration with the Western world (Ula) or to the advancement of the European integration (Maja). In this context, the onset of "Europeanness" is seen as something natural and inevitable.

By contrast, Maksymilian argued: "This is on the one hand something you are born with, but on the other hand you can also choose to abandon it and you can also choose to become European". He suggested that he didn't think that immigrants are less European than he is. As he explained: "if they live here and of course if they subscribe to the same core values as most of the Europeans."

The understanding of Europeanness by Maksymilian referred to a political factor (nationality at birth), but also to the attitude (subscription to the European "core values"). One of the respondents who considered that Europeanness can be chosen added further conditions:

> I'm waiting for the people from Mongolia, Nigeria and Morocco, as long as they will be committed to my identity, okay. I'm officially against all those individuals who are coming from outside of the EU, using economic power, work and the stuff, but they say [voice stylised]: "oh, my religion doesn't allow me to agree with a rule of law in the European Union." You don't like it, leave it. Take it or leave it. And for me, this is equal, if you want to come here, for me it doesn't matter what's your race, what is your background as long as you are contributing, willing to offer something to Europe … . You can be whatever, but you have to respect. I'm against all the immigrants who are not respecting the law. (Stanislaw)

Stanislaw clearly perceived the Europeanness as an attitude determined by the already existing culture, implicitly: autochtonous. Yet others recognized that cultures are hybrids (e.g., Darek), that what is now European is also a mix of other, external cultures:

> I think this means to be Greek, Italian, Pole, German, to be a person belonging to one of the cultures of the European countries. It does not mean, of course, that you have to, although this

> culture of Europe, it evolves and it is difficult to identify, as it does not necessarily refer to the Judeo-Christian Europe, because our values evolve and, perforce, we have opened to other influence, especially from Africa or from India, if you look at Great Britain, or from Turkey, if you look at Germany. I think this is to know the culture of one of these countries, this is to be European. (Darek)

One of the women did not know whether "being European" is something to be born with or chosen (Zofia). She stressed the fact she originated in a small village and was raised in a communist period what made it impossible to be "born European". This opinion suggests that Europeanness and living under dictatorship were antithetical for her. This might mean that, for Zofia, one can be European only if one lives in a European – thus based on European values – society. She emphasized the importance of the pre-accession period, when even kids at school could learn a lot about the European Union.

Ksawery felt first of all Polish, although he also felt European in parallel, exemplifying the concept of the "kit of identities" described for example, by Romaniszyn (2003):

> I was born Polish, and I probably will die Polish, but there is a certain concept of European citizenship that I can easily associate with and this concept is in me, it coexists with the concept of nationality or citizenship, it's not predominant, probably it's a kind of a bit theoretical structure that helps me understand how we are working together and abandoning some bad ideas that we had in the past, but it is really coexistent with the concept of national identity or citizenship. (Ksawery)

Several authors emphasized the link between the intra-European mobility and feeling of Europeanness. Indeed, many of my interlocutors underlined the importance of leaving the country (Patrycja, Otylia), of moving around and seeing other cultures (Patrycja, Emilia, Beniamin): "It is difficult to [observe] when you are inside, but it is sufficient to leave and then, while meeting a fellow European in the US, you feel that you've met a sister soul" (Otylia). As Beniamin revealed:

> I think I was not born European, but I became European when I came here, … when I started working for the EU, when I started travelling around, going to France in one weekend and going to Germany in the other weekend. I felt that I'm really European, that this European dream came true. (Beniamin)

Klara emphasized that she did not really feel European, that it was not an important criterion of identification for her.

Some pointed at the importance of comparison with the "Other" (here America, Asia, Africa) to feel European (Bernard, Maja, Otylia, Aleksandra). As Bernard observed:

> one feels European as opposed to other cultures - non-Europeans. Then we realize that we are different from them, from those other cultures and we have more in common with other European nations and with other civilizations. (Bernard)

Some others (e.g., Filip, to a certain extent Kamil) suggested that being European is neither something with what one is born, nor something one can choose. As Filip suggested, it is rather something one can acquire with upbringing. In line with an opinion expressed by Filip, Kamil observed: "No, no identity is natural of course, because everything is being socialized to you through education and upbringing, so there is no such a thing as a natural identity." Upbringing in a certain cultural area was also important to Adrian:

> [being] brought up in certain culture, in the culture which, despite a big number of atheists and people of other confessions, is dominated by Christian tradition, so, above all, the Greek-Roman tradition, this for sure, especially, I would emphasize the Roman tradition, definitely more than the Greek one. (Adrian)

4.6.3.2. European values

Several interviewees, while expressing their opinion on whether being European is inborn or can be chosen, referred to European values to which one needs to subscribe if one chooses to be European.

Zygmunt Bauman, while pointing at the predominance of discourse emphasizing diversity rather than common features of European nations (2004a:5-12), proposes to focus on European "values", as "identity is more fully defined by the values Europeans cherish than by any other of their characteristics" (Bauman 2004a:125). Also Shore and Black stress the need for "common cultural heritage" involving also common values for the formation of identity (1994:294).

Inquired about the common European values, those respondents who gave meaningful answers[210] were quite unanimous concerning the European values. The same indications were much more recurrent and a couple of values were mentioned by an important part of the respondents. Most importantly, this is the case of democracy (almost 40 percent) and freedom (30 percent), followed by human rights, tolerance and social cohesion/solidarity (slightly less than one fourth each). More than 15 percent of the respondents mentioned other values such as: compromise/cooperation, peace and the rule of law. Other values mentioned by several persons included respect for the other, unity/integration and prosperity, followed by equality, diversity and security.

It should be added that the indication "freedom" encompasses "freedom" or "liberty" without qualifiers, as well as freedoms and liberties concerning a particular sphere of life (e.g., "individual liberty", "freedom of conscience", "freedom of expression" political freedoms", "freedom of religion" or "lifestyle freedom"). For my respondents, these different types of freedom were sometimes seen as distinct and enumerated as different values.

These indications are hardly surprising. Such values as "peace", "human rights", "democracy" or "rule of law" are obvious foundations of the European constitutional and political systems and could be hardly contested. Valorisation of "compromise and cooperation" must, at least to a certain extent, flow from a daily experience of those of my respondents who are involved or directly concerned by the EU decision taking processes. However, indication of "tolerance" and "solidarity" has a more noticeable political colour.

4.6.3.3. Features all Europeans have in common: distinctiveness from the "Others"

In addition to their understanding of European values, I found it useful to ask my research participants about their "self image" as Europeans. Indeed, Caporaso sees identity as "self-

[210] Six out of 50 respondents did not give any answer to this question, few gave only one or two examples of such values, while one person clearly misunderstood the question.

conception rooted in society", placing it in a clearly relational context ("who we are" as compared to "the other") (2005:66; see also Shore and Black 1994:293; Shore 1996:487-488; 2000:63). Also Castiglione insists that that European identity requires a sense of distinctiveness (2009:36), while Evans-Pritchard (1940), more generally, argues that the identity formation involves creation and consolidation of boundaries distinguishing the categories of 'us' and 'them' (Shore 2000:63).

I asked the respondents to enumerate at least three out of the main features all Europeans have in common, which generally distinguish the Europeans from non-Europeans. A few respondents stated that Europeans have nothing in common.[211] One group of responses focused on features related to the objective situation of Europeans, e.g., to history and its consequences, or material status of the Europeans, wealth, good standard of living. More than one fifth of the respondents quoted past common heritage and/or common history as the main distinctive feature common to all Europeans. A few research participants mentioned common values, common tradition, or, more specifically, Christian tradition or Greco-Roman roots. Another relatively numerous group referred to multi-linguism.

An important number of respondents referred to the attachment to privileges and social security (more than one seventh of the total), sometimes contrasting it with the alleged lack of business-oriented attitude. In the same vein, several persons indicated such attitudes and convictions as high importance attached to private life (as opposed to work) as well as solidarity and egalitarianism. On the other hand, a few respondents quoted individualism and liberalism. More than one seventh of the respondents pointed at the attachment to human life, human rights and democracy, as well as to peacefulness, the latter often in the context of the tumultuous history of the past century. More than one sixth of the persons who answered the

[211] Five out of 50 respondents did not answer the question.

question considered that a distinctive feature of the Europeans is their attachment to education and culture.

A number of answers contained references to positively valued attitudes related to the social life, such as taste for diversity or multiculturalism, a sense of compromise and openness. Other characteristics quoted included interest in global issues or self-criticism.

The query confirmed, to a certain extent, the truthfulness of the latter: some other attitudes identified might be read as self-criticism. Indeed, several respondents indicated at the sense of superiority of Europeans towards other nations, euro-centrism, but also euro-scepticism.

Overall, it is quite striking that the replies varied a lot and the most common answer was shared only by one fifth of the respondents. Thus, "feeling European" actually seems to mean different things to different respondents.

As it clearly results from other questions, the Polish EU officials do feel European. Thus, to a certain extent, the question at stake reveals their European self-image. This image does not seem to be particularly influenced by their job or their specific situation. References to the importance of culture and education, attachment to democracy and human rights or taste for diversity belong to a common set of positive characteristics of the Western-European ideal, as presented by the pro-European cultural and political elites of Poland since early 1990s (thus, since the question of the European integration came to the fore). The myth of the European quality of life, as opposed to the American cult of the work and "rats race" have been quite common among the young educated Poles. On the other hand, also the criticism does not sound genuine: complaints about European economic "socialism" and insufficient sense of entrepreneurship are typical *clichés* employed in the liberal and "free-marketeer" discourse, both in Poland and in the Western part of the continent. As to self-accusations of

Euro-centrism and sense of superiority, they have been common in the narrative of the Western intellectuals and the political left, especially in the post-colonial context.

4.6.3.4. Employment in the EU institutions as a "rite de passage": becoming more European since working for the EU?

The impact of institutions on building of the European identity, both inside and outside their confines, has been recognized by Bellier and Wilson (2000a:17). As Shore and Black claim,

> The question has been raised by EU supporters and integration theorists of whether or not a supranational European-consciousness capable of transcending the ties of nationhood might be emerging among those bureaucrats who work in the institutions of the Community. Our evidence … suggests that this may be happening (Shore and Black 1994:281).

As Bellier and Wilson observe, the EU officials (of all institutions), whose "European life is defined by status, personal commitment or professional assignment", are perceived as "the new 'true Europeans'" (2000a:17). In particular, the authors consider the European Commission, with its ideology and "modes of integration", as the "'avant garde' of a new society in the making" (Bellier and Wilson 2000a:11).

Benson-Rea and Shore recall the neo-functionalist "spillover" assumptions according to which the EU officials "drawn into the EU's institutional milieu and webs of relations" progressively acquire loyalty towards the EU and its institutions (2012:480). The authors label it as "socialization to Europe" (2012:480). This phenomenon is also referred to by Bellier and Wilson who observe that those, who support the integrationist efforts of the European Commission, tend to strongly "believe" in European identity (2000a:7).

However, the authors point at heterogeneity and complexity of this "identification idealistically undertaken for professional purposes" (Bellier and Wilson 2000a:7).

Having these theories in mind, it is preferable to approach the issue without pre-conceptions. In fact, the previous research was performed upon officials of different age, having joined the institutions in different moments and having spent there often much more

time than my respondents. Moreover, the studies referred to above did not focus on any specific nationality.

I started by asking the question to all respondents (50) on whether they consider that EU officials are more European than Belgians and Poles in average. The purpose of this question was to find out whether they considered that their specific role infused them with any special sense or degree of Europeanness. Based on the data collected from questionnaires, it seems that the majority (over three-fifth of the entire group) of the respondents considered that the identity of the EU official (irrespectively from their nationality) is more European than it is the case of average people in Belgium or in their home country. Almost one fifth of the entire group affirmed the opposite. The remaining one-fifth either did not respond to the question or admitted they did not know or did not understand the question.

Certain persons added explanations for the reasons justifying a stronger European identity of the Eurocrats. Some explanations referred either to the ideological stance ("For sure, otherwise, we wouldn't be here"; "Eurocrats are more European than others, most of them really believe in what they do") or to the loyalty to the European cause developed as a result of dealing with the EU matters ("It is more European due to the fact of dealing with the 'European' issues at work in opposition to working on national issues while in Belgium or other EU national administrations"; "the Eurocrats mostly operate on this dimension either at work or outside of work"; "Eurocrats are much more consciously involved in the European case and life. It's our job and our reality"). Other respondents explained that this feature is due to the specific social situation of the EU officials, who "have more contacts with other Europeans" and "live here in a very international and multicultural atmosphere, which is not the case with the people in other countries".

One person clearly referred to the idea that the EU officials are a pre-figuration of the future "European man": "The families of Eurocrats are often the closest approximation of a (non-existent) European nation: usually multilingual, often mixed couples, and moving smoothly between various European cultures and/or blending them".

For some others it was a question of better knowledge of EU matters, as "people working for EU institutions have usually much more knowledge and understanding about EU policies and issues than "average people" in member states – and in many cases this translates into a more European identity". On the other hand, one respondent, although acknowledging the fact of "having better knowledge", did not see it as factor making the EU officials more European conscious: "No, they are just more involved and informed".

Another person explained that the "most Eurocrats keep to their national circles."

I went more in depth with this issue during the interviews, asking my interviewees if they have become more European since they joined the institutions. As a preliminary remark, it is worth noting that, according to Kaelbe, no more than a half of Europeans, in average, sees themselves as Europeans and admits any identification with Europe (2009:203). Moreover, this situation has not been evolving for the last 30 years (see also Kraus 2008:53-54). Again, it is important to note that this might apply to the Poles to a much lesser extent, as Poland is a new member state and, as explained elsewhere in this thesis, that its accession to the EU was perceived as a major political and historic development, anchoring Poland in the West.

During the face-to-face interviews, many interviewees admitted that working in the EU has increased their identification with Europe, although in numerous cases it remained unchanged or the opposite process took place. Certain common patterns could be identified in the justifications advanced. Some interviewees emphasized that they had gained better

understanding of the EU, its policies and its mechanisms. This additional knowledge sometimes made them feel more European:

> I'm definitely more in touch with European topics and that's why in a way, yes, I'm more aware and more interested than if I had worked on something completely unrelated in one member state. (Aleksandra)

Those interviewees who confirmed that they had become more European, often referred to the experience of representing, defending the European interest, permitting them to look at things from a different perspective or to identify with the European stance, often different from the one of their own member state, as well as a specific feeling of ownership:

> Yes, … perhaps. I know more and I am able to analyse some events from the European point of view and not only from the Belgian, or my own or Polish point of view. Yes, and I feel a bit responsible as an official, this is mine [laughter]. (Maja)

> I think that what must have changed in me a lot is the fact that ten hours per day basically I work for Europe and not for Poland. … The fact that you pursue European interests which are often in opposition to Polish interests ... , you perceive your home country as an external power in a way, which is sometimes friendly, sometimes neutral, sometimes hostile, certainly changes to a certain extent your perspective of your home country… And certainly, I identify myself much more now with the European interest and European Union than I did in the past. (Maksymilian)

In the same vein, one interviewee mentioned that she felt a strong identification with the EU and her institution in situations of misunderstanding or manipulation of the "European" message:

> I've got moments when I become much more European being here, for instance when I see how national newspapers can misrepresent what is being done by the Commission ... So there I get a bit patriotic for the Commission or European purpose, just by seeing how the messages get misrepresented and badly presented to suit the national government. (Aleksandra)

Aleksandra and Maksymilian do not only speak about the attachment to the European common interest, but clearly refer to the emotions they experience and attitudes they adopt vis-à-vis the "Other" – in this case the national instances, such as the government.

Among the reasons for becoming more European, some people quoted the multinational working environment and the opportunity to discover other European cultures:

> Because of meeting people from other countries I really like that, because it makes your work more interesting, you meet other cultures. (Ula)

> Yes, definitely, because I met others, I became more knowledgeable and I know other European cultures better. So, in a way, yes, definitely, because of that and my horizons expanded. (Bernard)

> Yes, for sure, for sure, I mean the observations and, precisely, accommodating to the cooperation with the others have taught me a lot about people, about Europeans. (Otylia)

> It's because of the fact that once you are here, you meet all these different people from different countries, you talk to them on daily basis, you go abroad on daily basis, and you really, because of that, you feel European. (Beniamin)

However, the mere circumstance of living and working among other Europeans is, to a certain extent, common to the EU officials and other migrants, such as Polish workers migrating to Brussels which is a multinational city. In this regard, some interviewees made interesting precisions, suggesting that the accrued feeling of Europeanness is conditioned not only by the surrounding, but also by one's position in this multinational crowd, namely the feeling of being equal to other Europeans, being subject to the same rights and expectations. On my explicit question whether, for reasons he mentioned in the statement quoted above, the Polish workers had also become more European, Beniamin answered:

> The higher level you have, the [higher your] social status …, the more you feel European, because, then you can really enjoy all these rights, which stand for being a European. (Beniamin)

Another respondent elaborated on this point:

> Yes, I think I did [become more European since working in the EU institutions]. I've really developed this feeling of belonging to Europe because previously, either I was just a Polish person living in Poland, or I was a Polish person living in France. And in France, there was this perception of Eastern Europe … with all the stereotypes coming with this, not necessarily positive. So, whether I was Polish or Czech or whatever, it didn't matter. I was just from Eastern Europe, almost Russia, you know, like this. Okay, it didn't bother me too much, but I think here the advantage is that we are all at the same level. And even [one] Commissioner … said it once in an interview, while he was defending European public sector, he said that it's so amazing that after just eight years after the accession of the ten new countries, all those new people came to work here and now you can never say, you know, who is from the old member states or who is from the new member states. They are just doing the same jobs and when you visit the offices you would never say who is from where by just looking at them or looking at the quality of their work. So I think working here creates really a very strong sense of Europeanness, definitely! (Zofia).

A minority of interviewees denied having become more European since the employment in the EU institutions.

Better understanding of the functioning of the EU, quoted as a factor enhancing one's European identification, was also the reason for disappointment for some:

> I think I became a little less European in a sense that I've understood some mechanisms that first of all reveal that the concepts and the values that are enshrined in the treaties and in the political declarations are not always shared by governments or also by the European officials of certain nationalities, or certain member states. So, in this sense I feel a bit less European and more sceptical. (Ksawery)

> I am a bit more sceptic because I could see how the EU institutions work from the inside, so I know that sometimes it's just, you know, normal work like in any … big organizations. Same problems, same issues, same attitude. (Jeremi).

Finally, in certain cases, better understanding produced both positive and negative results:

> Yes, I think so. I think I understand better the mechanism of functioning of Europe despite that I have, in certain sense, become also less [European], as from the outside, I couldn't see what is wrong in it. (Laura)

Some of those, who denied having become more European indicated, however, on some important changes that they would not (or hesitated to) qualify as increased adherence to Europeanness, mainly of the same nature as those quoted by the EU officials cited above, thus related to the increased understanding of the integration and to the intensity of contacts with other Europeans:

> Maybe a bit - I became more used to moving from one culture to another, but these are really not the cultural differences within Europe … Yeah, the cross-cultural contacts, maybe that's the most important. So, for me it's kind of natural to contact people of other European cultures and communicate with them and understand them, … so in this sense, I've became a bit more European-wide oriented person, but, okay, then, I don't think that it's any … distinction of any importance, it's not important at all. (Sebastian)

> No, but I think it made me more conscious of the need for integration in the economic field and of the need for cooperation (not integration but co-operation) and co-existence, peaceful co-existence between the nations of Europe. (Darek)

Overall, if the majority of my interviewees confirmed that working in the institutions made them more European, the analysis of the factors they proposed as the explanation of this process requires caution in drawing conclusions. Indeed, if such factors as working in the common European interest (often against the immediate, short-term interest of their own country), or even better understanding of the European integration could indeed stimulate the European consciousness and hence identification of my respondents (this phenomenon

labelled as *engrenage* has already been abundantly described, notably by Shore (2000, 1996, 2005, 2007)), such factors as working in the multi-cultural environment and the related empowerment (equal status) could enhance a general cosmopolitanism of my respondents (in the sense given to this term by Colic Peisker (2006)), and not necessarily specifically their Europeanness. On the other hand, however, these accounts go in the sense of the conclusions of Shore who considered that a multi-national and multi-lingual environment, combined with their status and privileges fuel the emergence of European identity amongst the EU officials (2000:140). It should also be observed that the experiences of Zofia or Beniamin seem to echo, on the micro-level, the description of the empowerment of the Central and Eastern European countries, which considered the accession as a realisation of their long-term aspirations and for which becoming European was, in a certain sense, a proxy for "becoming equal" or raising their international status (Laffan 2004:80).

On the other hand, the "minority report" was also interesting in the sense that it sometimes revealed a certain disappointment with the European project.

4.6.3.5. Relevance of the pro-European attitude for the job

Liesbet Hooghe remarks that candidates to work in the institutions are usually supportive for the European institutions and what they represent (2005:869). The author considers this "self-selection" as an important element of the selection of future EU public officials. However, despite a wide recognition of the effect of working for the EU on the individual feeling of Europeanness, most of my interviewees considered that their work does not require particularly strong euro-enthusiasm. Some indicated that engagement for Europe might help to achieve good results:

> I think it is certainly preferable that someone has a favourable attitude. If one's attitude is indifferent, it would probably not change anything, if one's attitude is negative, then probably. (Dominika)

> If you don't believe in what you are doing then … for sure, you will be a worse worker than another one who believes. (Ula)

In case of some persons, the answers were influenced by the nature of the specific job:

> In my work, there is no ideology, only pure free market principles. (Darek)

> I mean, specifically mine, as I am a kind of in-house lawyer in our Directorate, 99 percent of my contacts are with other employees of my directorate or of another Directorate, so I do not have such ... metaphysical dilemmas. (Maja)

> I'm not in contact with the member states normally. … I don't have this kind of pre-occupation really. (Zofia)

> I think, everyone could do this, maybe because it's a rather technical position, so the technical knowledge, and technical abilities are more required than knowledge about, I don't know, European Law or how the European Union works. (Jeremi)

Some others considered that their work could be done by anyone, or anyone with the necessary qualifications, irrespectively of their convictions:

> Technically speaking, I think that anybody with required qualifications in terms of education, or experience could do the job. (Maksymilian)

> Just need to be a hardworking person. It's not a rocket science, so everybody can learn it. (Beniamin)

Others put the stress rather on intercultural skills, openness, ability to function in a multi-national environment (Zofia, Emilia). Another group of interviewees believed that EU officials should have a pro-European attitude, although this is not always the case in practice:

> I think there are a lot of persons who don't know why they are here. Probably only because it pays some [good] money, some prestige … I've lived here for 20 years, I know what is the real impact of the Union on [people's] life, I do not know why the Poles don't [have a pro-European attitude] ... I do not see it, they do not verbalise it at all, I do not hear it among certain persons who are so frustrated that they do the paperwork. (Laura)

> I would like every Eurocrat to be pro-European, and it is not so, I know it. Many people actually ... have no stronger pro-Europeanness in themselves, and consider it simply as a job, while I would like it to be so, as this pro-Europeanness would certainly entail greater effectiveness, one would feel a real impact on the reality one shapes. (Adrian)

Finally, an important group among my interviewees considered that a pro-European attitude or at least understanding of the overall purpose of the integration is indispensable in their job:

> Yes, my job needs … some kind of understanding of the objectives of the European Union as a community of countries and citizens that share certain common values and are able to mobilize

> some resources to work together and to provide mechanisms to implement those ideas in reality. (Ksawery)
>
> For sure, it is required to have this pro-European attitude, because you are not allowed to favour your own country … you have to learn to treat every country in the same way and forget about the national interest. (Patrycja)
>
> That's natural if you work in the Commission, you must have a certain sense of working for the good of the EU, so it doesn't mean that you necessarily need to be EU Federalist, but at least ... you must know what's the purpose of all of this. (Kamil)
>
> One needs to believe in the principles of free movement and then have liberal, I suppose, economic approach. (Aleksandra)

The reason for such divergence of answers received may lie in the fact that most of the jobs in the EU institutions are at the expert level and only very few (including the managerial level, commonly referred to by EU officials as "the hierarchy") are of political nature. Therefore, although these jobs certainly require the understanding of the objectives of the EU integration, they do not require particular ideological zeal. The work of assistants, human resources managers, IT or logistics specialists certainly requires specific expertise, but not even the understanding of the European integration.

4.6.3.6. "Cogs in the wheel": making a difference through work in the EU institutions?

Several authors stress the role of the EU officials in furthering the European integration, referring to them as to "active agents of change" (Herrmann and Brewer 2004:15) and emphasizing their role in promoting their "vision of 'European consciousness'" (Shore 2000:1).

Indeed, most of the interviewees had the impression that their work actually "made a difference", had an impact on the reality. Again, their responses were very much dependent on their actual position in the EU institutions. Those who had more technical positions, related to the functioning of the institutions, saw their contribution in terms of a "cog in the wheel":

> It doesn't have much to do with policy, but it has to do with all these important services for all the officials. … I think that making a difference for me is just making sure that this whole machine … is running smoothly and whenever there is a problem somewhere, we detect it very quickly and try to find a solution. And I think … it doesn't make a difference for the European Union as such, but it just gives, how to say, the standards for the others to work, and I think it's also important ... It's not like working in the spotlights, it's like working in the shadow, behind the scene. (Zofia)

> I do not belong to those persons telling you bullshit that work in the administration is about sorting papers. If I did not believe in it, I would not work here and I feel pity for these people who are telling you this bullshit that their work does not correspond to their education, etc.). I think that, at my level, I do a good job and my job, I am able to explain what it is for and what its impact is in the real life. (Laura)

> It's hard to say that my work makes a difference because I see myself as … [a cog in a wheel] [laughter], because well, I am a part of a team, so I have my responsibilities, I can see how results of my work can influence work of my team, I can imagine, how this can influence outcome of my team, but, to say that, yeah, I see something that I can change the Europe, no, it's definitely not this case. (Jeremi)

> We are little bones, or some cogs in the wheel; I hope it changes something on a long run. For sure. (Maja)

> I hope that what I do educates and enlightens our officials here, who bring some new values to their everyday life, what impacts, on its turn, the political life. So, I am a little "cog in the wheel". Well, otherwise, I wouldn't be able to stand this work, if I didn't believe in it [laughter]. (Otylia)

By contrast, those who were more directly involved in the policies of the EU had the impression of having a more direct influence on the course of things:

> I see quite an immediate impact … I participated in adoption of a few decisions [thanks to which] … the situation of consumers improved, because they have better choice and better prices. But, yes, well it takes time, so it's not immediate effect, I see effect once per year, it's not like every day I go home and I know that I did something useful, I see usually after at least one year of work on the project. (Patrycja)

> I think it makes a bit of difference, because my regulations, which I draft, save lots of money for consumers and also save lots of money for the industry and I also protect environment … So I think that my work really brings something to people. I don't build the bridges or houses, but I think my work contribute to the wellbeing of this planet. (Beniamin)

> In this DG the work is very legal, so one can hope that the laws that are produced are making it simpler for people to move around in the single market. (Aleksandra)

> I definitely think so, I think that what I'm doing contributes to the construction of the internal market which is at the very heart of the European integration … . Overall my work makes a difference in the sense that it will probably contribute to a better implementation of free movement of services and freedom of establishment, … and in this sense it contributes to the establishment of internal market and generally enhances the economic efficiency and contributes to the welfare of the consumer, of the European consumer. (Maksymilian)

> I have satisfaction, when I see that this is tangible … . Nobody knows it, but I am behind it. (Darek)

Those of my respodents who worked in DGs dealing with the functioning of the internal market often referred to the "European consumer" or to the "consumer welfare". Their sense of the mission was strongly impregnated by the functionalist approach of the founding fathers of the European integration: for them, working for Europe meant: working towards the integration of the markets and their better functioning. This attitude mirrors the views reported by McDonald (2012:544) from her fieldwork in the Internal Market Department (DGIII) in early 1990s. This might serve as an example of how daily work and exposure to the ideology of a particular service shape the vision of Europe of "new" EU officials leading, in case of my interviewees, to similar results as in case of "old" EU officials in the past (unless we assume that they had all chosen the particular DG based on their prior understanding of priorities of the European integration).

However, a number of interviewees put into question their capacity to influence the reality, drawing attention to the fact that the important decisions are taken by their "hierarchy" or the politicians:

> Very few because politicians who do have influence, in this case, would need to read what I make … for my job to have impact on something. (Filip)

> No, I don't think it makes any difference. ... Because I'm just a small part in a bigger whole and I really don't have any impact because decisions are made at the higher level and I just execute, I assist, I follow, I stay informed, but I do not make any decisions at all. (Bernard)

Most of my interviewees were convinced that their work had impact on the reality, either indirect, by contributing to the optimal functioning of the European institutions (as the metaphoric "cogs in the wheel" referred to by several interviewees) or direct, by their contribution to legislation or policies. The satisfaction with which they talked about it makes clear that they believed in the beneficial effects of the institution's actions. Those who did not believe in such an impact, referred to their limited capacity to influence the political level.

4.6.3.7. What does the European integration mean?

As Jack Citrin and John Sides state, European integration is a process that has been furthered by the elites (2004:163). It is thus interesting to investigate how the European elites themselves understand this process.

Ginette Verstraete observes that "physical and virtual mobility" is at the heart of the European integration, as one of the four freedoms proclaimed in the EU Treaties (Verstraete 2010:4). In practical terms, the possibility to cross borders without controls has been introduced with the Schengen system in the 1990s. The free passage of borders was extended to Poland a few years after the accession. Favell qualified this freedom of movement as "perhaps the EU's single greatest achievement, after the securing of peace and prosperity in post 2nd world war Europe" (2005:2).

In fact, many of my interlocutors inquired about the European integration referred to associations with mobility – freedom to move and work in the space without borders:

> Being Polish, you can see those things more easily, because it's kind of new to us, I mean the fact that you can travel without the passport. Or there are no controls on the borders, you don't have to ask for visas. (Dominika)

> Giving people economic freedom, so enabling them to move around and benefit from the opportunities in other countries. (Aleksandra)

> For me it means that you can really freely move in Europe either to travel or to work. (Emilia)

> There are no borders. There are countries, but there are no borders. Meaning that you can freely move from one country to the other country. You can live where you want, work where you want and it really doesn't matter where you come from, or where you were born. (Beniamin)

Indeed, my research participants clearly belonged to a group which could clearly benefit from the mobility opportunities and – given their strong links with the home country – practiced intra-European mobility on a daily basis. They could appreciate this aspect of European integration even more than average inhabitatnts of Western Europe, as they were often born and had grown up in a closed country – as citizens of the communist Poland they encountered strong administrative and financial barriers to movement abroad.

Some others emphasized the economic aspect of integration, the Internal Market and the coordination of the economic policies:

> For me a lot about European integration, which I value a lot, is the single market. (Aleksandra)

> I see it much more in economic terms. I think this is about integration of the economies … . I see it much more as leveling the principles of economy, so as to have a single solid territory, something like the United States. (Darek)

Some referred to the political and international dimension of the European integration and expressed a conviction that it was something inevitable, resulting from globalization or become necessary for the European countries to keep their position in front of the growing economic superpowers, such as China or India:

> I do believe that European integration is absolutely necessary for the European countries … to count in the world today. I mean, definitely, each of European states taken separately is not strong enough … in economic terms to be able to … influence the way the world is being designed, and definitely in order to influence things in terms of … world trade. (Maksymilian)

> [It's] a process resulting more from the globalisation, from the fact that we have a global village now, … and that we have new players in the international relations, such as China or India, which were not active before, while the role of the European countries has decreased. In my opinion, if Europe is to count in the World, it has to go as deep as possible. For me, this is a struggle maybe not to survive, but to maintain the position not only of the states, not only of the European economy, … but also the European culture. (Adrian)

These accounts did not include any definition or even description of integration, but it might be understood from the context that they referred to the economic or political aspects of the European integration.

Certain respondents referred to the unifying factors, such as common values ("social progressive ideas, protection of environment") or common goals. Some others focused on the objectives or the benefits of the integration, quoting, for instance, "safety", "freedom", "peace":

> The first benefit, and absolutely the most important type of benefits, these are political benefits and saying political benefits, I mean safety. Safety at the global level… (Sebastian)

> So it's Europe, different countries, but without borders, and freedom. Freedom - I think, that's the right word. (Beniamin)

My interviewees did not talk about the full integration of different European nations into one nation of Europeans, although they are sometimes referred to as the pre-figuration of such a society. A minority explicitly expressed scepticism with this regard:

> For me, the European integration as integration of identities, "unity within diversity", I mean, I do not see it coming through in practice. (Klara)

> I do not see the [European] integration in the sense that we will all integrate, mix up with each other, become some kind of mutants and there will be a single European who will be an "integrated" European and that this will be the end, the ultimate creation of the European Union. (Darek)

Finally, a number of interviewees described the European integration in terms of benefits for the Poles: either in its economic or symbolic aspect as, for instance, Stanislaw, or in terms of social and cultural progress:

> The happiness for my people, happiness for Poland, great opportunities, great opportunities! It's not the money. It's, first of all, opportunities that we are the members of this family where we wanted to belong. If I now think about these times of the Soviet Union when the communist propaganda wanted to say that Poles, Bulgarians and Russians are brothers. We are mentally not brothers, we are different. (Stanislaw)

Overall, one could easily notice that all of my interviewees perceived European integration as something utterly positive:

> I think it brought, probably this is not a right term, some kind of civilization, progress. Civilization not in terms that it brought some new machines, but progress in terms of progressive thinking and ideas. (Kamil)

> [European integration means] my life. Otherwise I wouldn't be here. … I'm quite convinced that this is a good way. Okay, I'm still amazed with the phenomenon, right? It never happened in the history. (Sebastian)

The explanations of my interviewees covered a range of aspects of integration, but they remained quite sober and down-to earth, relating either to the much cherished (especially by nationals of a former mobility restricting dictatorship) possibility to travel without borders, or to less tangible on the individual level, but widely reported and acclaimed economic and political common benefits. As insiders, they are sufficiently well informed to realise that the melting of the European populations into one nation is not imminent and thus abstained from daydreaming about this remote possible outcome of an "ever closer Union". If, indeed, they

are a pre-figuration of a future European nation, they seem to believe that they will remain it for quite a long time.

4.6.3.8. Europeanness of Poles

John Hutchinson suggests that the relation between the European and national identities has always been intimate and that many of the latter developed "alongside or in relation to a sense of Europeanness", and, conversely, the concepts of the European identity are informed by "national views of the world" (2003:37). As Eriksen points out, "while in Western Europe, meticulously planned attempts at fashioning a supranational identity [we]re presented", "in Eastern Europe, many citizens ha[d] clutched onto ethnic identities after the fall of the old regimes (1997:252).

During the interviews, I inquired about the general perception of Poles in terms of their "level" of Europeanness in comparison to other Western Europeans and Belgians. Given that the Western Europeans may perceive the Eastern cousins through certain streotypes and, openly or implicitly, qualify them as "different", the question was meant to reveal how the Polish EU officials perceive the population of their home country from the point of view of their European characteristics and identity. Moreover, being European may also mean a slightly different thing depending on a country. The question referred to the quality or intensity of Europeanness, but many of my interlocutors preferred to focus on the issue of the pro-European attitude. Indeed, the question, as I conceived it, presupposed the understanding of Europeanness in terms of certain features and values. Responding to this question required a similar understanding of Europeanness by the interviewee, while many of my respondents, as it seems to result from their answers to other questions, conceived Europeanness along purely political or geographical categories. This must have been the reason why it was often understood in terms of support for the European integration.

Those who understood the question as concerning the support for the integration often considered that Poles are more pro-European than most of the "old" European nations, for reasons of freshness of the outstanding opportunities brought by the enlargement, but also because the accession to the EU was an old dream come true. The recent date of the enlargement and the radical nature of the related changes permit the Poles to compare the situation before the accession with the present one, in the EU:

> Poles are more Euro-enthusiastic than other nations. Maybe because we've just joined and we are still receiving, we still see more positive sides of the European Union, instead of more negative sides. I think it depends on the age, because older people … sometimes can see the European Union … like the Soviet Union that it was before - something we were forced to join, we have nothing to do with it, we have no rights to vote, to decide about this. And younger people especially those who were born after 1989 or around 1989, they have grown, I would say, in the normal country, they see EU rather positive, because they know that thanks to the European Union, they can travel across the whole Europe only with their Polish ID, they can work in any EU country, they can call home for less than it was three or four years ago and they know that it is thanks to European institutions and European Law. (Jeremi)

> I don't think that they are more or less European. I think they are more conscious about what it brings on a daily basis. (Dominika)

> I think … it's a more conscious way of becoming European. Because for older countries, they take thing for granted, yeah. They are now in the European Union among others for a long time, so for them it's not that important, it doesn't make a difference, but for us, I think, it does. (Ula)

> Poles, … especially young Poles, are very European … It's confirmed by these all statistics that Poles are a very European nation because we see the chances and benefits which we receive. (Stanislaw)

> Oh, this I don't know, but I think the attitude, like being proud of being European or saying I'm European it goes with the situation of a … specific country in the EU at a [given] moment. So I think that now Polish people are more eager to say they're European, because I think there is a lot of benefits because of joining to the European Union, but other countries, especially old member states, I think, … they still feel European, but they don't want to say it loudly, because they see Europe now more as a burden and a danger for their national interests. So I think there is a slight difference now, especially with this financial crisis, there are countries, which want to feel less European or are afraid of what is going on here. (Patrycja)

Such opinions were sometimes associated with a reservation that the situation is likely to evolve in the future and the "fatigue" typical for the people in "old" member states will inevitably catch up Poland as well:

> And I suppose it also depends on when one is looking at. My feeling was that as a new member state, we were keener and … more interested in the EU and less critical. … [T]he longer the country is a member, this enthusiasm fades a bit, but yes, I suppose, the spirit is probably still stronger in Poland definitely, than it is [for instance] in the UK. (Aleksandra)

> We are more European than many older member states' citizens and I feel that this is kind of phenomenon that exists with all the new enlargements and then of course, after a couple of years we understand better how it works and what is good and what is bad and then of course we not only strengthen our enthusiasm to the enlargement, to the concept of European integration, but also we find some mistakes or some drawback in this and then of course, we establish some kind of relationship that is far less enthusiastic than at the beginning. (Ksawery)

Finally, some of the interviewees denied the existence of differences in the attitude towards the EU based on nationality, attributing it to other parameters, such as age, level of education or other circumstances:

> I think it depends not on the country one lives in, but rather on the level of education and on the environment you descend from. The more educated people are, the more pro-European they are. (Maja)

> It's really hard to say, because I thought that maybe okay, we still have a lot to catch up as Poles but looking at, or listening to some people now or reading about people in different countries, I think it's so individual that it is really hard to say or, yeah, that in one part of Europe the attitude is different than in the other. So I think it can be really a small place in Italy, where people … don't really feel Europeans and [it] can be a city in Poland where yes, people will feel Europeans. It depends on the age, on many other things, so I don't think there could be a pattern like that. (Emilia)

Some of those who (probably) understood the question as referring to some cultural features, tended to claim that Poles are as European as people in other member states. This was the opinion of Beniamin, Bernard and Filip. Filip added:

> The question is whether [they are European] in the same manner. Perhaps differently, but neither more nor less. … Every nation has its specificity, but cultural attachment to the ideas, even if someone does not call oneself "European", but has the same ideas ... so, I would say, neither more or less, [but rather] to the similar extent. (Filip)

Some others, interestingly, put into question the suggested comparison, either pointing at particularly and outstandingly European features of Belgians, or indirectly putting into question the the notion of Europeanness:

> The Belgians are not a good example. The Belgians are an amalgamate (Otylia)

> No, … Belgians are outstandingly European, for the reason that the institutions are here, but also for the reason that they are ethnically diverse, what, in Poland, is not the case, for good or for bad, hard to say. There is no ethnic diversity. So, the Belgians are, after the Luxembourgians, probably the most European. (Adrian)

> For instance, are British really very European? I think that's really an example of a country that has never found its place between Europe and the US and somehow they are proud of feeling, you know, so different and unique and when you ask a British person, I'm not sure if they will

> say spontaneously that they are European. When you ask a Polish person, I think they would be proud to say this. (Zofia)

> This is a very interesting topic, for example, I look at it through the prism of what my husband thinks about it … It is interesting, for instance, that the Greeks do not consider themselves European. They always say: "you, the Europeans", they consider that they belong to the Balkans, and they always speak about the Western Europe, perhaps not in the negative terms, but as about something distinct, so there is a row already here. We do not realise it ... Of course, we've always been behind the Iron Curtain, for us, the Western Europe has always been one entity, and suddenly it turns out that the Southern countries, they identify themselves with the Mediterranean Basin, they identify themselves with the Balkans and they absolutely do not identify themselves with the Western Europe. Belgium, France, Netherlands. For them this is a completely different world and a different mentality that they do not understand. … From this perspective, I think we are different as well, as the Poles have much in common with the East and there is some Slavic spirit that distinguishes us from this "Western Europe", but, warning! In this Western Europe, let us not count, e.g., the Mediterranean countries. (Klara)

The idea that there may actually exist different "Europes" was not isolated. Darek acknowledged that

> the Poles are obviously on the border of Europe which belongs to the culture which was subject to the influence of Vatican, which is Catholicism, or, later, Protestantism, Evangelisms, we belong to the part of Europe which neighbours the Europe influenced by the old Byzantium, Constantinople, where [there is] a slightly different culture, in Russia, and we are somehow within the borderland of this other Europe. This is also Europe, but it is slightly different – where there were other influences - Tartar invasions and those of various Mongol tribes – and we are a bit different because of it, as we know something else, a bit different culture, but this does not contradict the first part of my response, as the way we are, with these Tartar or Russian elements which are familiar to us ... , this is our Europeanness which is the component of a larger European culture. (Darek)

This idea of a "decentralized" Europe of different cultural circles differs from another vision of Polish Europeanness presented by one of my respondents, namely the one shaped by the "center-periphery" relations. Maksymilian explained:

> Historically speaking, I think that Belgium contributed more to coining these [European] values than Poland and in this sense we've always been a bit peripheral, whereas Belgium, Germany, France or Italy, were in the very heart of Europe and they were producing, you know, Europeaness if I can say, that we were subsequently adopting. On the other hand, even today the ideas are born and are disseminated first in Western Europe, and Central and Eastern Europe; in a way, we just adopt it. So, in that sense, I think that we still are peripheral and maybe we adopt these values, we take up the trends born in the West, but in the same time, it takes more time than in Western Europe and … , well, to put things bluntly, there are certain European values to which, I'm afraid, an important part of my compatriots do not subscribe, so in this sense you can say that Poles and other Eastern Europeans are little bit less European than Western Europeans. … For example, tolerance. I think that Poland is still a country where you can be persecuted for your sexual orientation, the colour of your skin or your religion. I mean, for the religion, I'm afraid that in the West they also have a problem with this, but I think that there is much more racism and homophobia in Poland than in France, or especially in such countries as the Netherlands or Belgium. (Maksymilian)

The question revealed a practical problem related to the plurality of meanings of the word "European". If, in other questions, the word seemed to be understood in the same way, probably thanks to a clearer context, the question on the Europeanness of the Poles was understood in several manners, revealing probably the most intuitive understanding of the notion by my interlocutors. The first group responded according to the political understanding of the term, usually claiming that Poles were more supportive to the EU and the European integration. The reasons for this (unintended) understanding could also be the imprint of my respondents' despair face to the growing Euroscepticism that they already witnessed in that period. This might have directed their attention to Europeanness understood as support for the European integration. On the other hand, they spent most of their time surrounded by fellow EU officials and expatriates, including Poles. This environment could present sufficient uniformity to make the question of cultural differences rather abstract.

However, another part of the interviewees understood the question as referring to the cultural features, mostly claiming that the level or the type of Europeanness is the same or similar in Poland and in Belgium, although dissenting voices indicated to certain differences due to the historic cultural influences from the East and the South. Finally, certain persons understood the Europeanness in terms of European values governing the society and referred to the Polish backwardness and peripherality.

4.6.4. Conclusions on Polishness and Europeanness

The question of the identity of my research participants concerns not only their declared attachments to Polishness or Europeanness, but also the perceived relation of these identifications to their work with the EU institutions and the actual meaning of "Polishness" and "Europeanness", as they refer to it.

The map of attachments of Polish EU officials looks quite complex in the light of my research. What is most striking is the very clear majority attaching primary importance both to being Polish and being European. The professional identification (being Eurocrat) was slightly less often declared, perhaps due to the negative connotations related with this label. Even Slavic identification, strengthening the "ethnic" side of identity, seems to correlate with the attachment to Europeanness and does not appear a rival to the latter. The responses of my research participants confirm they do have several identifications, something that Romaniszyn (2003) referred to as "a kit of identities".

The understanding of Polishness by my research participants can be analysed against the distinction between ethnic and political (Western) nationalism, drawn by Smith (1981). Polishness is most often understood as determined by culture, language, and tradition. Some of my respondents even referred to the "blood" criterion, while only a limited number referred to the relation with the State. This seems to confirm the views of Marody (2003) and Kociuba (2009), who have claimed that Polishness is predominantly ethnic, as there was no time in the past to develop stronger links with the State (which historically was rarely perceived as a Polish State). However, the founding myths and symbols referred to by my interviewees were rather inclusive, often related to the recent history of the fight for freedom and democracy, and usually with clear reference to the European vocation of Poles. Importantly, the "fight for freedom" myth does not bear redemptory and victimising "messianic" features (Koczanowicz 2008). This should not be surprising considering that, as emphasised by Janion (2007) or Davies (2001), belonging to the West (as opposed to the East which is represented mostly by Russia) has always been an important element of Polish identity. At the same time, the responses of my research participants do not bear any particular resentment towards western Europeans, as observed and described by Janion (2007) and Pogonowska (2002). Also, their self-perception as Poles seems to be, in general,

rather sober, suggesting the lack of excessive complexes, but also the absence of an idealization of the Polish people. Therefore, the identification of Polish EU officials does not seem to be affected by any stronger feeling of inferiority, such as observed by Janion (2007) and Sztompka (2004). This does not exclude a possible idealisation of the West at the moment of arrival.

Most of my research participants also feel European. The hierarchy between these two identifications was often difficult to establish, as many interviewees declared that it changes depending on a situation. This confirms the view according to which identity is fluid and negotiable, continuously re-defined (Eriksen 2010; Easthope 2009; Bauman 1996, 2004b). Constantly fluctuating self-ascriptions seem to present a strongly relational character: not surprisingly, situations involving non-European "others" were the ones during which the European identification was most strongly felt (such views were expressed notably by Bellier and Wilson 2000a and by Borneman and Fowler 1997). However, my research does not provide evidence for a constant tension between the national and supranational identifications, as observed by Bellier (1993, 2000a, 2002). Such tension is probably more likely to appear in a strict work context, which was outside the scope of my research.

The aforementioned plurality and fluidity of the Polish EU officials' identifications can be partly explained by the factors which may concern everybody living in a multicultural society and being exposed to globalisation: as Delanty and Rumford point out, "the nation state is no longer the primary reference for … identities" (2005:88). Eriksen (1997) saw hybridisation as a phenomenon particularly concerning Western Europe. Would a Polish EU official have more identities than an ordinary urban European? This is difficult to verify without doing similar research on a control group, but many testimonies of my respondents seemed to confirm the findings of Bellier (2000a) and Shore and Black (1994) on the Europeanism of EU officials: most of my interviewees have become more European since

they joined the EU civil service. The reasons quoted were quite diverse, including everyday contact with fellow Europeans from different cultures, what led to their empowerment, and what could contribute to the emergence of some kind of European cosmopolitanism. Many of the explanations refer to their professional identification: a professional focus on EU matters, a better understanding of the Union and its policies. Even though my interviewees thought that their profession did not require particular Europeanizing zeal and could be done by anybody with the required skills, it is important to note in this context that many of them had the impression of actually contributing to the realisation of the European project, with a metaphor of "cogs in the wheel" being particularly recurrent. This "feeling of ownership" indicates deep involvement in European affairs.

Moreover, the research led to two interesting conclusions. Firstly, most of the research participants considered Europeanness as something acquired, chosen, and not inborn. This seems to suggest that, unlike Polishness, Europeanness is considered more as a political attachment, with a dominant "civic" rather than cultural aspect of identity, in line with the arguments of Bruter (2004b) and Citrin and Sides (2004). This will be further confirmed by responses to other questions.

Furthermore, given that national identities rely on myths of origin and a particular interpretation of history (Hutchinson 2003), I tried to identify the "historical myths of continuity" (Vermeulen and Govers 1996) that were shaping the Polishness of my research participants. In many cases, these symbols and myths which related to their Polishness (the most important events in the Polish history, the most significant historical figures) were somehow related to the Polish road to joining Europe and the European Union. The symbols mentioned by my participants often related to recent history and notably to the Polish journey to inclusion in the West (understood not only as the EU, but more generally as liberal democracy and freedom). This mainly belongs to what Zubrzycki (2001) qualified as a

"distinctively Polish civic narrative", emphasizing the link with European culture and history, with reference to constitutionalism, the fight for "our freedom and yours", and religious tolerance. It might therefore be concluded that the main elements determining the Polishness of my research participants were also those confirming the European vocation of the nation. If Polishness is predominantly "cultural", what is "civic" in it is precisely the European vocation, the germs of Europeanness. This seems to suggest an answer to the question of the relation between the two identifications in light of the classification of Risse (2004): Europeanness appears as the essential part of the variant of Polishness characterizing my interviewees, as if it was nested therein. This is also in line with Delanty and Rumford, who claim that "both European identity and national identity are embroiled in each other" (2005:54).

By contrast, it may be a starting point to nuancing the view of Eriksen (1997) who opposed the strong ethnic identity of Eastern Europeans to increasingly supranational Western-European identities. Góra and Mach, in the same vein, opposed the ethnic concept of the nation - exclusive, conservative, family and religion oriented, and "oriented to the past" to a more "open to further changes", inclusive, civic model, claiming that the first is counter-productive as regards European integration (2010:17). However, "ethnic" identity does not need to be "hostile" and intolerant towards other possible identifications. The understanding of Polishness based on "cultural" and "ethnic" features is accompanied, in the case of Polish EU officials, by a "civic" element which is very Europeanizing in nature: their founding myths and historical references confirming the eternal "Western" destiny of the nation. This corresponds to the distinction between a "private" and "semi-private sphere", where ethnic and cultural Polishness takes over, and a "public" sphere, where the civic aspect of their identification implies Europeanness. Thus, as such, its "ethnic" Polish identity does not seem to exclude the emergence of a supranational, European identity. This might be even

more plausible if we understand it as a sort of "meta-identity", as proposed by Risse, who argued that the European and national propositions are not zero-sum propositions (2004:260).

However, the characterization of Europeanness by my research participants proved to be a somewhat laborious exercise. They largely differed in the features they considered common for all Europeans, their distinctive features. They were more in line with each other as concerns European values, although the catalogue quoted was rather a standard set of values to be found in political declarations and legal documents.

This picture largely confirms the previous findings in this chapter. Indeed, a growing cultural diversity may be at the origin of the lack of a cultural basis for the European identification (Castells 2010 [1998]). Reference to common values of a clearly political nature confirms the "civic" nature of the Polish EU officials' European identification.

Chapter 5. General conclusions: "Europlanet"?

The analysis of the results of my research suggests that the response to my first research question, concerning the adaptation and social life of the Polish EU officials in Brussels, must be more nuanced than the conclusion drawn after my first research (Rozanska 2009). The situation during the first years after their arrival in Brussels was relatively straightforward: the results strongly suggested the image of a bounded community of EU Polish officials, not yet fully acquainted either with Brussels or with Belgian society or even with the community of the "old member states" EU officials. As a result, they socialised intensively among themselves, quickly building community institutions (such as the "EPS" mailing list or the monthly "Old Oak"/ "Wild Geese" meetings) and strong and extensive social networks. A few years later, the situation has become much more complex.

Before reflecting on the outcomes of my research as regards the integration of Polish EU officials in Brussels, I will briefly note the characteristics of the incoming group and of the host population, as perceived by the participants in my research.

The reason for the arrival of Polish EU officials in Belgium was not to join their compatriots in the quest for the means of subsistence. They have come in order to take up a specific job and could not care less about the fact it is located in Belgium. This, as well as their professional and material status and their lifestyle, allow us to qualify them as high-skilled foreigners, but they constitute a distinct group from the Brussels expatriates. Indeed, they have arrived with a clear intention to stay at least for some time, even if many of them do not exclude the possibility of further mobility in the future.

Since the host population is heterogenous, the question arises of what the actual "target" of any integration/adaptation might be. Eriksen (2007) referred to the possibility of integration with the society or with the (ethnic) community (*Gesellschaft* or *Gemeinschaft*).

However, in the case of Brussels, the local population is even more diverse, as it covers not only Belgians (who are considered by my respondents and interviewees to be the host society), but also other EU officials, expats, and other groups of Poles, as well as other ethnic communities distinct from the main French- and Dutch- speaking population. Of course, this is a typology rather than classification and these categories may also overlap (e.g., Belgians working in the EU) and the lines of distinction between them may be blurred.[212] However, these nuances, although important, do not seem to be essential for my analysis and my research participants do not seem to have taken them into account in their responses.

As could be anticipated, the research has shown the existence of certain dominant patterns, but has left the picture very much blurred. Indeed, the Polish EU officials are not a fully homogenous group as regards their attitude to integration in Brussels. Certain fractions of the researched Polish EU officials were more open to integration to the host society than others and their perception of the attitude of the locals also varied significantly. Similarly, their relations with their own community (which can be assumed to exist) varied to a large extent, ranging from intensive socialisation within the Polish "EU bubble" to loose contacts with one or several circles of friends and acquaintances, existing in parallel to other circles involving other Eurocrats and expats. The analysis along the lines of the complexity approach proposed by Eriksen (2007) can give a hint as to how different factors influenced and shaped the models of these multiple relations.

Eriksen (2007) remarks that groups exist from a certain point of view, based on certain criteria. My research participants perceive themselves in terms of belonging to an ethnic group (Polish), as well as to the corpus of the EU civil service. At the same time, depending on the situation, they may expect to be categorised by other people as Poles, Eastern Europeans, EU officials, or expats. They certainly see themselves as a community,

[212] For example, there may be Italians who are expatriates and those born in Belgium, belonging to an ethnic community and feeling both Belgian and Italian, yet both may feel they belong to the same community.

but they are conscious that they are not perceived as such by Belgian society, for whom they belong to a larger Polish community (which, from their own perspective, does not exist) or are amalgamated to and stigmatised as EU officials.

The sense of belonging to the community of Polish EU officials is certainly partly based on the ethnic element. After all, most of my research participants participated in different forms of community life reserved for Polish people, such as monthly meetings or the Polish mailing list. However, two other factors, which are at least equally important, are, in my view, related to their status as highly skilled foreigners and the community of interest and experience related to their employment in the EU institutions. At the same time, as reminded by Blackshaw, today, communities are not "absolutist" any more and do not "make a total claim on the individual" (2010:23). Also, in this case, the sense of belonging to the Polish EU officials' community (which could be deduced from the majority of participants' accounts) does not determine their social contacts, circles of friends, and acquaintances and it is far from being for them "*the* world in miniature" (Blackshaw 2010:23, emphasis in original). At the same time, they clearly feel part of a larger community of EU officials.

5.1. Boundaries or "criteria of exclusion and inclusion"

The role of boundaries is paramount in community building (or imagining) by the Polish EU officials. This phenomenon (boundary construction and submission to boundaries in the expatriate world) has been abundantly described in the literature on expats, both in culturally distant contexts (see e.g., Fechter 2007a, 2007b; Butcher 2009; Beaverstock 2002, 2011; Farrer 2010; Leonard 2010a, 2010b) and in the Western context (see e.g., Favell 2001a, 2008a; Gatti 2009; Beaverstock 2005). Despite all the differences (not least including power relations) between the situation of expats in Indonesia, as described by Fechter (2007a, 2007b), and the situation of Polish EU officials in Brussels, certain – at least superficial –

similarities are striking. If European expats consciously build boundaries separating them from the local people, who are perceived as culturally and socially different, in order to emphasize their high status (see e.g., E. Cohen 1977), the Polish Eurocrats are also separated by boundaries that they construct. However, the case of Polish EU officials in Brussels presents interesting specificities.

Firstly, Polish EU officials clearly maintain a boundary separating themselves from the majority of Polish people in Brussels. This is related not only to the cultural (lifestyle), social (class), and professional differences between the two groups (or even communities, since my respondents often emphasized the high level of functional organisation of the population of Polish economic migrants in Brussels). Based on several accounts both during this research and the previous one, I have suspected that the Polish EU officials, even if they often praise the industriousness and professional reliability of Polish cleaners, construction workers, or plumbers, fear that they might be amalgamated by Belgians (or other EU officials and expatriates) with this category of Poles, consigned (as documented by Siewiera 1995; Grzymała-Kazłowska 2001b, 2005; Kuźma 2010, 2012-2013, 2013; Leman 1997; Paspalanova 2006) to a relatively low social status and considered (as one of my research participants put it) "uncultured". Therefore, building a boundary is crucial for the affirmation of their different, higher status. This might recall the interpretation of E. Cohen (1977) who claimed that the expats maintained boundaries in order to preserve their privileged status. However, in the case of Polish highly-skilled movers in Brussels, these boundaries are aimed at separation from a minority group, another category of foreigners (and not the host society), and they are instrumental for the affirmation of the status vis-à-vis the local population and other expats.

This phenomenon cannot be considered unusual and remains in line with the existing literature. Notably, Amit remarks that "geographic mobility does not override and may even

exaggerate status distinctions of class, gender, nationality, or race" (2007:10), while Salazar notes that accrued mobility related to globalisation comes together with boundaries based on "social class, gender, age, lifestyle, ethnicity, nationality, and disability" (2013:60). My study constitutes a good illustration of this phenomenon, as there are clearly at least two different communities, internally organised, relatively populous, and made distinct by their professional status and social class. It can be argued that the boundary drawn by the Polish EU officials to separate them from the other Poles plays a significant role in the very definition of their community.

Drawing boundaries between the Polish EU officials and Polish economic migrants is not only useful but indeed easy. In the narratives of some of my research participants, the "Siemiatycze" people are described as a very different *genre*, with distinctive behaviour, interests, lifestyle, mentality. It would be much more difficult to find "index features" (Nash 1989) permitting to draw a boundary between Polish EU officials and Polish highly skilled mobile professionals from outside the institutions. Indeed, the aforementioned exclusionary practices do not concern the latter group, although, at least in certain situations, they are occasionally reminded of their non-institutions status (as they are not informed of certain events or cannot fully participate in work-centered converstaions). However, as they are not holders of the primordial stigma, EU officials have no interest in emphasizing their distinctiveness.

Another important boundary is the one drawn between Polish EU officials and Belgians. The obsessive "pestering" about Belgium, Belgian institutions, and Belgian "mentality" may – to a certain extent – correspond to the actual emotions and judgments of my respondents and interviewees. Having moved from Warsaw to Brussels, I had very similar opinions on the quality of services in Brussels (usually of much lower quality than on the very competitive Polish market). However, the ritual, total, and very much exaggerated

character of this criticism (which sometimes resembled my own spontaneous reactions or those of my friends) seemed completely disproportionate and – in my view – played the role of a vocal boundary marker. Indeed, recurrent criticism of the local order is a prominent part of the conversations of expatriates and EU officials in Brussels and seems to stand for an important element of "us-them" narrative building. It confirms belonging to the privileged, globally mobile class of high-skilled professionals on the one hand and to the community of EU officials on the other. Furthermore, boundary building by the Polish Eurocrat community seems to serve yet another purpose – it is being done as an act of their empowerment as Poles, a reaction to the boundaries imposed by Belgians. Therefore, it also facilitates the rebuttal of the anticipated negative stereotyping by the Belgian society (i.e. as being "uncultured" Eastern Europeans from a poor and underdeveloped country).[213] Indeed, the apparent criticism of the local reality and the indifference manifested towards the local people are associated with even higher boundaries being imposed (at least in the perception of my respondents) by the host society. Building their own boundary based on ritual verbal rejection of the ways of the host society both protects them from the lower status associated with stereotypes about Poles and encloses them in the preferred, empowering category of Eurocrats.

This phenomenon can be best observed in the example of Poles living in Belgium before Poland's accession to the EU and their consequent employment in the institutions. Before the enlargement they had to submit to the boundaries imposed on them by the local society, boundaries which they tried, in vain, to cross or level. As EU officials, however, they enjoy a more elevated status which permits them to "strike back" and impose their own boundaries which perform a double function: to separate them from the host community

[213] The anticipation of stereotypes does not necessarily imply the anticipation of a negative attitude (only a minority of my research participants expected negative attitude of Belgians to Poles). During my previous research, Polish EU officials sometimes referred to frequent cases of amalgamation with the low-skilled Polish workforce ("we are a country of cleaning ladies and construction workers"). Obviously, this is not how the Polish EU officials see themselves.

which rejected them in the past and to cement their accession to the community of EU officials or expats, privileged movers who do not need to exist at the margins of the local society but can afford an independent status "in a different dimension". From this perspective, further research on the actual perception of Polish EU officials by EU officials of other nationalities could usefully complement my findings.

Although the aforementioned mechanisms of boundary making seem to apply to most of the researched Polish EU officials, the case of those interviewees who had lived in Belgium before joining the EU institutions appears particularly interesting. Indeed, their accounts illustrate the situation where members of migrant communities enjoying a relatively low status in the host society are presented with an opportunity of "upgrading" their status. This requires a different approach to boundary making (based on different diacritical features), liberates them from any integrative pressure and implies a totally different relation with the host society. This aspect of the use of boundaries for community making has not been explored in the literature. Such cases might be further explored with a more tailored set of questions and with a wider group of research participants who had previously been living in Belgium. Such future research (ideally completed with the accounts of the other side, the host society) might provide interesting information, notably about the process of altering the power relations between the minority and majority groups in the context of migration and mobility.

The aforementioned elements allow us to answer the question evoked by Eriksen regarding "criteria of exclusion and inclusion in a group" (2007:1060) and to better understand the initial conditions for any form of integration of Polish EU officials into the plural society of Brussels. From this perspective, it appears understandable that Polish EU officials perceive integration with the larger society (*Gesellschaft*) as useless given that the conditions of such integration would appear unfavorable. Indeed, the majority of their

accounts confirm that they considered such integration unnecessary. Following the same reasoning, they have absolutely no interest in integration with the ethnic Polish population of Brussels. However, they might be interested in becoming a part of another *Gemeinschaft*, notably of the EU officials in Brussels. Indeed, responses to several questions suggest that my research participants perceived EU officials as a single tribe and that they had developed a strong professional identification. At the same time, most of them do not anticipate negative stereotyping (based on their ethnicity or nationality) from their colleagues. Again, further research could usefully focus on the dynamics of integration within the community of EU officials based on accounts of other EU official (and not only on the perception of Polish EU civil servants).

This seems to be a major difference compared to the examples provided by Eriksen (2007). Pakistanis in Norway, Maghrebians in France, or Turks in Germany are all examples of ethnic minorities faced with choices (or coercion) to integrate into a "larger society" or a dominant culture. In the case of Brussels, Belgians are much less visible from the perspective of EU officials, as their respective worlds hardly ever intersect. Still, asked about "the local" my interviewees and respondents intuitively referred to Belgians, but their presence is more symbolic than real. Certainly, one might argue that this is also the case for any ethnic immigrants strongly embedded in their ethnic communities in other cities. But, writing about Brussels, Favell (2001a, 2003b, 2008a) has emphasized the specificity of Brussels in this respect, drawing attention to the absence of integrative pressure, partly due to the absence of the real dominant culture. EU officials (or other expats), unlike ethnic minorities, do not even belong to the local labour market and have less to do with Belgian administration (e.g., they do not need to declare their earnings and many official contacts with administration pass via dedicated services of their institution). This situation can be compared to the renting of a flat in a block of flats. A tenant is aware of the fact that the flat belongs to a landlord, but the

contact with the landlord – if such is the tenant's choice – is incidental. As years pass, the flat becomes a familiar space, the tenant starts to feel at home, identifies it as his place. At the same time, the tenant does not need to care about reparations or refurbishment, as this is the landlord's task. Landlords and tenants can become friends, but this is by no means expected or considered natural by any of the parties. Staying within this housing metaphor, one might compare ethnic minorities to a *fille au pair* or a distant nephew living with a family. They also keep their autonomy and can – to a certain extent - choose how much they want to be involved in the household's life. But some interaction is inevitable and its intensity also depends on the expectations of the family. They may live a relatively independent life in their *boudoir*, or, on the contrary, end up as a full member of the family.

5.2. Social integration

These general orientations are not mutually exclusive with the eagerness to participate, to a certain extent, in the social or political life of the local population which many of the Polish EU officials declared. Their model of integration broadly corresponds to what Favell (2001a, 2008a) has referred to as "integration into the city". At the same time, many of them strongly criticise Brussels and see the advantages of living in the city mainly in its multicultural character and proximity to other, more attractive destinations.

As even Favell et al. (2007) admit, the situation of people integrated into a parallel reality of international, multicultural Brussels is not ideal. Despite comfortable living and working conditions, EU officials remain strangers in the city and hence remain, as inhabitants of Brussels, relatively powerless and fragile as they have no influence on (e.g.,) decisions concerning the urban space around them. Contacts with Belgians are difficult – most of the research participants who have ever tried confirmed this. Life in "another dimension" has its limits – they can adapt and prosper in the local reality, but cannot influence it. Indeed, in spite of having developed different forms of participation in the life of the capital and

following the events of public life in Belgium, many of them show indifference towards public matters concerning their immediate surroundings. Also, only a very small minority of my interviewees declared that they had voted in local elections. Polish EU officials perceive the living conditions in the city as a completely external factor, something they cannot influence in any way, much as they cannot stop the rain. They seem to exemplify the negative aspects of "integration *à la carte*", mentioned by Favell et al. (2007).

If Polish EU officials are not particularly interested in any form of deeper integration into Belgian society, it is also because they do not perceive Brussels as fully Belgian– "this is the city of expats", as one of them said, after all. This is why they see absolutely no need to penetrate local networks or to participate in decision making on important matters concerning their neighbours. Indeed, the international character of the city makes it less necessary and more difficult to integrate into the Belgian society as such.

It can be presumed that more ample involvement in public life – such as voting or activity in local associations or non-governmental organisations – might accelerate the disappearance of old stereotypes (about Poles) and new stereotypes (about Eurocrats) on the Belgian side of the boundary and help the Polish EU officials fully participate in city life. After all, it is paradoxical to see that even in such a cosmopolitan city as Brussels, the pre-figuration of the future European nation lives in a bounded community, largely ignoring the public life and jealously protecting its "tribal" distinctiveness.

For the time being, however, there is not only little appetite for such deeper social integration on the part of the host society, but also no palpable pressure to do so or, indeed, even readiness to accept such attempts. The link between the negative sides of living in Brussels and inadequate influence on public life was mentioned by only a few of my interviewees. The accounts of many of my informants suggested perfect indifference towards the society living a parallel life in the same city. Therefore, referring to the analysis by

Eriksen (2007), this "model" appears to be chosen and not "imposed" from the perspective of the researched group.

However, some of my interviewees made an effort to vote or participate in the associative life. Further research could focus specifically on such pre-selected individuals and compare them to another group following more typical patterns of social integration. Such research could elucidate the reasons why certain EU officials decide to engage more than others and the consequences of such involvement for their functioning in the host society. Do they manage to penetrate Belgian social networks? Do they disengage, with time, from the international environment?

It should be specified that the aforementioned ritual rejection of "Belgianness" for boundary building reasons has a purely symbolic character – the Polish EU officials would certainly have nothing against incidental participation in Belgian "activities ... and institutions", as Eriksen has defined social integration (2007:1062). They simply do not feel the need for this and they do not think they would be welcome. Thus, they choose not to make any effort to this effect, rather than deliberately choosing to stay apart, as may be the case of certain minority elites mentioned by Eriksen (2007).

On the other hand, as was mentioned before, Polish EU officials perceive fellow Eurocrats largely as belonging to the same "tribe" as themselves. According to Suvarierol (2007, 2008, 2009, 2011; see also Shore 2000; Abélès 2004), outside work, Eurocrats avoid a multi-national environment, joining "national" clubs and networks. This is not the case of Polish EU officials. Even if they still count many compatriots among their friends – usually other EU officials or expats – they also maintain intensive social contacts with other expatriates and EU officials of other nationalities. It is important to note that the dated suggestions of Spohn and Triandafyllidou (2003) concerning the reluctance of "old" member states' nationals to accept Eastern Europeans and the recent findings of Ban (2013)

concerning divisions between Eastern and Western European Eurocrats do not find confirmation in the perception of the Polish EU officials I researched. Indeed, the closeness due to intensive socialisation at work, common tangible interests and work-induced similar ways of thinking – the elements of the much-researched phenomenon of *engrenage* (Shore 1996, 2000, 2005, 2007) – make such divisions improbable. As I mentioned before, my research participants intuitively considered other EU officials to be a homogenous category, seeing in them their fellow Eurocrats more than persons of any specific nationality. Further research might reveal whether other EU officials share this view.

Based on the above, it seems that the social integration of Polish EU officials is targeted mainly at other EU officials or expats, not necessarily of Polish origin.

5.3. Cultural integration

Much of what my research participants referred to as "adaptation" – the ability to function smoothly in a host society – can be interpreted as what Eriksen meant while referring to "cultural integration" (the existence of "shared references" and "mutual intelligibility") (2007:1062). Most of my research participants found such adaptation easy or unnecessary. Indeed, on the one hand, they perceive Brussels as a place "without local culture", emphasizing the international, pluricultural character of the city. On the other, however, as Europeans, they would not feel any need to undertake any specific adaptation effort, as the common European cultural background is sufficient to function smoothly in the city.

Those who considered adaptation problematic referred to language as the major problem. However, many of my research participants have learnt at least one of the official

"local" languages, usually French. In any case, French is also a part of their international world in which they evolve as this is a working language of the Commission.[214]

At the same time, without making a specific effort in this direction, Polish EU officials follow the latest news concerning their host country and occasionally frequent Belgian public celebrations. This, as well as language skills, certainly enhance their "mutual intelligibility" (Eriksen 2007) with at least part of the local population. Their attitude, again, as in the case of social integration, is characterised by chosen passivity, rather than intentional, active separation.

By contrast, my interviewees seemed perfectly culturally integrated into the group of expatriates and other EU officials in Brussels (strikingly, when asked about the merits of a hypothetical situation of living in a city inhabited only by EU officials, they criticised this idea by pointing to a lack of cultural diversity [*sic*] which would reign in such a place).

5.4. Transnationalism

On the one hand, the life of my research participants remains strongly tied to Poland and infused with elements of Polish culture (in the broadest sense of the term). Polish EU officials still travel regularly to Poland, ritually spend Easter and Christmas in their Polish homes, maintain contacts with their families in Poland, remain interested in the Polish news and events, and seek regular access to Polish culture.

On the other hand, they are not enclosed in any Polish ethnic "ghetto" and are not circular migrants, for whom the primary point of reference remains their own country with its culture, lifestyle, and tradition. Some of them were internationally mobile even before joining the EU public service and their lifestyle is strongly influenced by their new situation, the multicultural environment in which they live and socialise. Over time and with new routines

[214] Conversely, according to the results of the Language Barometer for Brussels released in 2013 by the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, English has become the second most spoken language in Brussels. See: http://www.briobrussel.be/assets/onderzoeksprojecten/brio_fiche_taalbarometer_3_2013.pdf

their lifestyles, interests, and perceptions start to become increasingly hybrid, accommodating elements brought by new cultural experiences. They are not so interested in daily access to Polish goods and if they use Polish services it is for the same reasons as Belgians or other expatriates. If their social life is not always very intensive due to long working hours or family obligations, they usually frequent the same bars or restaurants as other expats or Belgians instead of concentrating on Polish events or parties. Also, on the level of mental links with the home country, things change. Polish EU officials seem to progressively disconnect from the Polish reality, including politics or *fait divers*. More importantly, they often have a feeling of not fully understanding Poland anymore. Even if they maintain contact with their Polish friends, they are growing distant. Many of my interviewees said their best friends are already in Brussels. The perspective from which they see the world has changed.

All these changes are not specifically due to their contact with Belgian society. Interaction with the local population, ethnic minorities, and expats are just a part of their transnational experience. If we refer to the binary distinction between the "ethnic" (bi-national) transnationalism of the working-class migrants and the "cosmopolitan" (trans-national) transnationalism of the middle-class professionals, as proposed by Colic-Peisker (2006), one could probably find elements of both in the transnationalism of Polish EU officials. However, it would be difficult to judge whether one could apply the term "cosmopolitanism" to EU officials in the meaning given to it by Hannerz (1990) or Ley (2004) and thus an interest in and openness to other cultures. My respondents, based on their own self-assessment, are rather selective: for example, their attitude to other ethnic communities in Brussels is rather indifferent or negative.

* * *

The second question I wanted to elucidate throughout the research concerned the changing identity and identification patterns of the Polish EU officials since their arrival in Brussels and entry into the European public service.

This part of the research aimed at verifying whether phenomenon expected by Bellier and Wilson (2000a), Shore and Black (1992) – the emergence of a prototypical European identity – is taking place. The fact that my respondents and interviewees are Poles is not without relevance in this regard – according to Smith (1981), Polish migrants often feature particularly strong national and religious traditions and tend to retain their identity when confronted with a dominant culture.

5.5. Remaining Polish

Definitions of ethnic groups usually refer to "notions of shared culture" (Eriksen 2010:42), common memories, language, or religion (Weber 1997:20) which permit members of the group to maintain the feeling of ethnic affinity. Such a "feeling of belonging" is crucial for ethnic identity (Banks 1996:9). As it was easy to predict, almost all the researched Eurocrats firmly confirmed their Polish identity. The primary categories of reference for my respondents were Polish culture, Polish language, and Polish history and religion. The attachment to the Polish landscape and the Polish nation (a feeling of communion) were commonly declared. While defining Polishness, they typically referred to the fact of having grown up in the Polish cultural environment, although some even referred to the criterion of blood.

As the literature review has suggested, Polish national identity is predominantly based on the ethnic component (see e.g., Kociuba 2009; Batt 2001; Jaskułowski 2012). Indeed, very few of my respondents believed that being Polish is something to be chosen. Only one person referred to the link with the Polish State and its institutions. Another striking feature is the

attachment to Polish traditions and the very widespread link perceived between cultivating Polish traditions and remaining Polish. This aspect seems more important for the identification of my research participants than political allegiance or Polish ascendance. Clearly, their self-identification with Polishness mainly passes through cultural elements. Again, this is fully in line with the findings of Marody (2003) and Janion (2007) – in the absence of a Polish nation state for most of the 19th century, and given all the difficulty of clearly identifying with the communist dictatorship, Polish identification has remained predominantly ethnic, with a limited role for State-related loyalty and rituals.

What are the key features of the traditions and culture on which the identity of my research participants relies? Based on the past research and taking into account how Polish school curricula transmit national myths which have been cultivated to preserve Polishness for over two hundred years up to the present, one would expect that the vision of a shared history, instrumental to the Polish "we" consciousness, will be more "romantic", spotted with references to national uprisings and romantic heroes. This does not seem to be the case. The predominant founding myth in the collective consciousness of the researched Polish EU officials is the opposition to the communist dictatorship and the post-1989 process of successful westernisation, culminating in the accession to the EU. The main reference among the historic figures was Lech Wałęsa, sometimes together with other prominent dissidents or founders of modern Polish prosperity during the last quarter century. Also, the most important events of the shared history were often related to the anchorage of Poland in the West – for example, the fall of communism or (most importantly) accession to the European Union. Polish EU officials do not seem to attach much importance to national martyrdom or post-messianic concepts (such as clergy-inspired visions of Polish re-evangelisation of a materialistic Europe), still cherished by certain factions of the conservative and nationalistic right in their home country. Moreover, their attitude to religion seems to be rather moderate –

although the religious aspects of Polish traditions were sometimes mentioned, it seems that their Catholicism remains, at best, in the private sphere. Even the cult of John Paul II seems to be less overwhelming among the Polish Eurocrats – although the acknowledgment of the position of the Polish Pontiff in the national pantheon is related rather to his international fame and recognition and his alleged contribution to the downfall of communism and Polish accession to the EU than to the importance of the Catholic religion for Polish identification.

These patterns recall the observations of Leman (2000) who argued that, unlike in the case of indigenous ethnicities, immigrant ethnicities are characterised by references to a recent past, rather than a distant past, while drawing ethnic boundaries. However, in the case of my research group, they also say a lot about the type of national traditions that are essential for the definition of their national identity. The historic references quoted are those of the Poles' longing to belong to the West, it is about the history of Poland becoming (or becoming again) a Western nation, a natural member of the community of European nations such as the European Union. It is difficult to judge if this is shaped by the ideological climate pervading the political and media narratives in the period in which most of them grew up (the pre-accession decade of the 1990s) or by the values and understanding of Polishness cherished by Polish liberal elites, or even by their own Europeanizing ideology which prompted them to start a career in Brussels. The latter included a strong imaginary, partly referred to by Janion (2007) and Pogonowska (2002), long rooted in Poland, present in the media, but also in everyday conversations, namely "the West", a metonymy for Western Europe, associated with prosperity, civilisation, culture, and order, but also predictability and the optimal organisation of society. In any case, the kind of Polishness based on such common references is likely to favor the emergence of a European identity, as Europeanness is already an inherent part of it. My research participants seem to be saying: we are Poles, because we are part of the West, because we are democratic, liberal, and European.

Finally, it is also important to mention the national self-image of the Polish EU officials. Again, the positive stereotypes they cultivate about the Poles remain in the spirit of the times – they are mostly proud of their alleged industriousness. Traditional positive stereotypes that can be deemed of aristocratic origin ("bravery") or of peasant origin ("resourcefulness") were also quoted, but more rarely. Overall, the self-image of my respondents based on their responses to questions on national features and the Polish contribution to the European heritage suggests the lack of complexes, but also sobriety and proneness to national self-criticism.

However, many authors emphasize that, in addition to self-ascription, identity comes into being also by categorisation (De Vos and Romanucci-Ross 1995; Eriksen 2010; Jenkins 2008). In the literature review I referred to the understanding of identity by Jenkins (2002), who saw it as a process resulting from identification. As Jenkins further argued, identification results partly from the categorization of others, while categorization by others affects one's internal definition (1997:57). This phenomenon strengthens the relational nature of identification (and hence identity) and explains why ethnic or national identity usually becomes particularly relevant in the migration context.

In this regard, it is worth referring to the findings of Ban (2013) and Abélès et al. (1993) who claimed that in the EU institutions the awareness of one's own identity and the identity of others is strong. Ban (2013) also argued that there is a division between the officials from the old and the new member states. My research participants are clearly aware of their colleagues perceiving them as Poles, but they do not feel stereotyped or discriminated against. They notably happened to express satisfaction from their equal status, enabled by the framework of the EU institutions. These circumstances are likely to strengthen their national identity not only in the sense of often being reminded of it by contact with other nationalities, but also in the sense of a stronger feeling of belonging to a positively valued group.

5.6. Towards European identity?

When different authors expressed the expectation that EU officials would forge European identity for the Union, as the national elites constructed the national ones in 19th century, they obviously did not limit their hopes to a professional identity of EU public servants, which has already emerged, at least according to Bellier (2002), Shore (2000, 2007), or Abélès et al. (1993) referring to the commonly used metaphor of the "House". Such European identity would first be adopted by EU officials themselves, as the European elites working in the common European interest, and would then be further inculcated among the "common people", be it in the form of a "cultural identity" based on allegedly common cultural features and lifestyles, or a "civic identity" based on shared values and allegiance to a European polity. My research aimed at verifying whether such a supranational identity was emerging among Polish EU officials and, if so, on what it was based.

Most of the Polish EU officials researched confirmed that they had become more European since they joined the EU institutions. This phenomenon provides confirmation for the findings of Shore (1996, 2000, 2005, 2007) who described the mechanism of *engrenage*. Indeed, their professional identification, fuelled by an integrationist ideology and hardened with the necessity of sometimes having to further the European interest against the short-term interest of Poland, must have given birth to a genuine European identification, not only with their institution, but also with a larger European interest. This must have been even more so given that the Polish Eurocrats generally claimed to be convinced that their work makes a difference, often referring to the metaphor of "cogs in the wheel". In this regard, scholars (e.g., Risse 2004; Bellier 1993, 2000a, 2002) have remarked that there is often tension between national identity and allegiance to European institutions. In the case of my research participants, their identifications proved, to a significant extent, situational, as many claimed

that they felt more European than Polish in certain specific situations, notably while representing Europe, either outside the EU or *vis à vis* its member states.

In this context, it is particularly interesting to establish what the Polish staff of the EU institutions actually understand as "being European" and, consequently, what the nature of their "European identity" is.

Several scholars refer to Europeanness as a community of values (see e.g., Shore and Black 1994; Bauman 2004a; Citrin and Sides 2004; Kaelbe 2009). This vision of Europeanness refers to a certain standard catalogue of values reflected in several political and legal documents. The research participants identified such values as "human rights", "democracy", and "rule of law" as common to all Europeans. Similarly, their idea of distinctive features common to Europeans seemed to be rather of political or ideological inspiration, as it was limited to relatively trivial, abstract, and idealistic propositions such as "taste for diversity", or attachment to culture and education, or, on the contrary, negative stereotypes, such as "socialism". Overall, these tentative definitions of Europeanness, by reference to shared characteristics or by contrast to non-Europeans, did not read or sound very convincing and seemed to confirm the statement of some scholars who claim the main problem with Europeanness is the absence of common memory, but also of a clearly defined Other.

More importantly, the understanding of these European commonalities by the Polish EU officials interogated differed substantially. References to such commonalities were often superficial, shaped by common stereotypes, but definitely not suitable to serve as a founding myth and a collective symbol triggering identification. This says a lot about the nature of their European identity which is clearly political and "civic" rather than cultural. Perhaps, working and socialising with other Europeans could result in a feeling of cultural closeness, but the lack of a clear point of reference (such as "the Other") made it difficult to agree on the

cultural features that all Europeans have in common. This seems to be in line with their widely shared conviction about the "chosen" or "acquired" character of Europeanness.

To conclude, the European identity of the studied Polish EU officials has indeed emerged, but its basis is determined by the conditions that prompted its development, notably working on the realisation of a political integration process. Being European is collectively perceived as adhering to the values corresponding to the catalogue officially proclaimed as "European", as the allegiance to the European polity. By contrast, the understanding of "cultural" aspects of being European seems to be a matter of individual feelings or reflections and does not refer to any potent symbol or founding myth, the absence of which Eriksen (1997) and Giesen (2003) deplore.

The question is whether this model of identity can, in the future, be spread among a larger population which is not directly involved in ensuring the functioning of the European polity.

5.7. How much Polishness in Europeanness?

Certainly, the European vocation of my research participants has not resulted in the atrophy of their national identification. If the European identity were to come into being to the detriment of the national one, my research does not provide any evidence to this. On the contrary, as was mentioned, the national identity of my research participants has arguably become even stronger.

However, on the other hand, another Europeanness is possible: as Smith (1993a) argued, European identification can emerge "at a different level" and co-exist with the national one as some kind of meta-identity, not following the model of the national identity constructed to serve the nation state. Risse (2004) has proposed a model of multiple identities describing various relationships between the national and European identities as "nested", "cross-cutting", and "separate", while Romaniszyn (2003) has referred to the concept of "a

kit of identities". Indeed, my research participants do not perceive their European identity to be in opposition to their Polish identity. On the contrary, if Polish EU officials feel very much European without being able to clearly define it, it is perhaps also because they perceive Polishness as a sufficient condition of Europeanness. The latter is a corollary of the former, not an opposite concept. Indeed, as was explained above, the national myth commonly referred to by my respondents relates to accession to the EU. This is perceived as an integral part of the Polish national experience, apparently more important than the "romantic" tradition or even religion. This provides an answer to the question regarding the relations between national and European identity according to the classification proposed by Risse (2004): if Europeanness is a component of Polishness, then (at least as long as one shares in the type of Polishness displayed by Polish EU officials) European identity is "nested" in Polish identity.

As has been mentioned, for some of my research participants, joining the institutions was a consequence of the nation's lengthy efforts to join the West on the personal level. It empowered them and made them feel equal to Western Europeans. Seen from this perspective, identification with Europe is an essential part of Polish identity.

5.8. Why do I refer to "Europlanet"?

This metaphor stands for a complete, relatively isolated world, with its own, specific atmosphere and ecology. Inhabitants of a planet may be interested in other planets, moons and asteroids, but their interest is not vital, they could be happy without any notions of astronomy, building on their land, extracting its resources, etc. They do talk about aliens that they may find fascinating or dangerous, but they find it difficult to imagine what they are like, how they feel and function.

Are Eurocrats inhabitants of such "Europlanet"? I have to insist on the question mark following this term in the title of my thesis. My study does not confirm that the metaphor

perfectly fits the description of their life. Indeed, their world is very different from the outside world – thanks to its size, long history, multicultural character and ideological origins, it is more prolific in production of its own habits, professional identity and specific social relations than any other corporation or administration. However, their isolation is only partial, as their circles of friends and acquaintances include expatriates from outside the EU circle, they keep ties with their families, their identification patterns are complex, including both original ethnic and European elements. One might rather think of some modified version of the concept, drawn from science-fiction movies or books, such as a planet–colony, where inhabitants come from various parts of the Galaxy, keeping ties with their planets or lands of origin. One might think of a planet–capital of an interstellar empire, populated by various snail- or frog-like officials and diplomats, invented by George Lucas, united by their destiny, their common interests and a specific habitus, but distinctive by their picturesque tails, horns, shucks and trunks.

5.9. In a nutshell …

To conclude, I will re-state my main research findings and reflect on the broader contribution of my research to anthropology. I will also try to reflect on avenues for further research in this field.

My research participants can be qualified as a category *sui generis* in between immigrants and expatriates. Although their arrival is perceived as potentially leading to a long-term settlement, they feature certain types of behaviour often described as typical for expats, for example consciously constructing boundaries which separate them from the local population. At least in the case of those living in Brussels before the Polish EU accession, this boundary building helps them escape from the negative social categorisation they suffered as economic migrants. Polish EU officials tend to restrict their social activity to other EU officials and expatriates, not necessarily Poles. At the same time, they feel they are also

subject to stereotypes and exclusionary practices by the host society. They build boundaries between themselves and the host society for two purposes: to retaliate against the boundaries they perceive the host society to be imposing (and in the process confirm their status in Brussels), but also to confirm their adherence to the category of EU officials.

The aforementioned findings constitute yet another modest contribution to the extensive literature on boundaries and their functions in the context of mobility and migration.

Applying Eriksen's (2007) distinctions (as proposed at the beginning of this thesis) to my research participants must go beyond the traditional criteria of social exclusion, such as religion, colour, and access to the labour market.

From the social point of view, Polish EU civil servants integrate into an elitist social class of Polish and non-Polish EU civil servants (also counting Belgian EU officials). Culturally speaking they remain attached to Polish practices concerning food, language, and so on. However, they are able to smoothly function in the new environment and are culturally adapted to the host society.

One may call their cultural situation a "semi-permeable membrane" (Eriksen 2007:1061). Often approached with reluctance by members of the *Gesellschaft*, and paying relatively little attention to their relations with the *Gesellschaft*, they cannot be considered a culturally closed community: there is a strong ambition for mobility (supported by their elite status) and a meritocratic dynamic, but centered on their own community.

The application of Eriksen's (2007) perspective on complexity to the analysis of the relations with various communities or groups living in Brussels hopefully adds to the existing research on social and cultural integration. It also illustrates the irrelevance of methodological nationalism in studies on migration and mobility.

A factor undoubtedly fostering their Europeanness is the *engrenage* in the typically inter-ethnic European labour market segment, to which they are subject on a daily basis for a

minimum eight working hours a day. Some of them also identify with Europe as a personal mission that gives sense to their life. Another factor is the relations at work with other colleagues from other countries. This Europeanness is typical for the public realm (Lofland 1998) where they are active. What remains Polish are the aspects of private culture and semi-private spaces they occupy. In other words, there seems to be a split between European public and Polish private and semi-private life. The semi-public spaces, such as sports clubs and certain places for leisure time are the spaces where some of them have contact with Belgians. But what does the word "Belgian" mean for Polish civil servants in Brussels? For most of them it concerns native Belgians, or Belgians originating in other EU countries. Contact with immigrants of non-EU provenance remains very limited.

As concerns their identifications, they can be described as ethnically Polish and strongly attached to the Polish culture and language. At the same time, they perceive their Polishness as a crucial element of their European identity. The latter has a clearly political and "constitutional" rather than a cultural character. Indeed, as people involved in or at least witnessing European policy-making, Polish EU officials perceive the existence of European identity as something very real, and this is certainly what distinguishes them from other EU member states nationals for whom "Brussels" stands for a distant and alien force. The analysis of the understanding of Polishness and Europeanness, as well as of the complex relations between various identifications, is yet another input to the debate on the emergence and nature of supranational European identity and its relations with national identities. Given the dynamic character of these processes, this research should be subject to follow-up.

The present research may be considered as a (no doubt imperfect) proposition for a feasible model of how to perform a research among communities with very restrictive access such as EU officials. If there are not many anthropological publications on the different EU civil servant communities, it is perhaps because access to this kind of population is rather

difficult. In this situation, the combination of techniques that I used might make anthropological study possible, up to a point, even if these techniques have – speaking in traditional anthropological terms – strong limits, in particular from the perspective of those attached to traditional, Malinowskian anthropology.

5.10. Questions for further research

The very concept of my research concerning the integration of Polish EU officials into Brussels was to base it exclusively on the analysis of the perception of this issue by my research participants. This approach could be complemented by research performed on the groups with which Polish EU officials interact. As to the local population, it would be useful to verify their perception of and their attitude towards Polish EU officials. During my research, I heard some speculations by my research participants as to why Belgians have low interest in social contact with EU officials. It would be interesting to verify what these reasons are from the perspective of the autochthonous population. Would they be ready to accommodate EU officials in the circles of their friends or acquaintances? Is it a question of the characteristics of the incomers or rather of Belgian lifestyle and their model of social networks? Do they really have stereotypes about Poles and EU officials, and what are these stereotypes? Do they perceive Polish Eurocrats differently from those originating in "old member states"? Is the perception of Poles the same as the perception of other Eastern Europeans? Such research might allow us to foresee what the actual prospects for integration of Polish EU officials are in the future.

Similarly, additional research on Polish EU officials could be performed. Having in mind that the main problem here seems to be the absence of any contact due to the different lifestyles of EU officials and locals, it might be interesting to verify if establishing "institutionalised" zones of contact could change the picture. To this effect, comparative research could be performed between those Polish EU officials who sent their children to a

Belgian school and those whose children go to a European one. Similarly, such comparative research could be performed on those Polish EU officials who are active in local public life (in various associations and political parties) and those who do not engage in such activities.

It would also be interesting to verify how the perception of other EU officials and their attitudes by my research participants corresponds to the views expressed by EU officials from other member states. Do they also see themselves as "one tribe"? Are their relations with and perception of the local reality similar to those expressed by my research participants?

The research took place in the period preceding the anti-European or Euro-sceptical turn in the politics of Poland and several other member states. The possibility of Brexit was not even seriously discussed. Today, when the future of Europe looks uncertain and discussions on the shape and nature of the European polity burst out again, the feelings of my interviewees could be quite different. On the other hand, the increasing presence of non-European migrants and refugees in Polish and European media and political discourse and the proliferation of the associated imaginary may contribute to an increased awareness of cultural commonality in the face of the Other, as suggested by Eriksen (2010), Shore (2000), Romaniszyn (2003), Bellier and Wilson (2000a), Goddard et al. (1994), Borneman and Fowler (1997), and Castiglione (2009).

Furthermore, important changes have recently occurred in Poland. The spectacular electoral victory of the conservative, somewhat nationalistic, and euro-sceptic Law and Justice party (PiS) have visibly changed the social climate in Poland. Society is now split into roughly two camps: supporters of the "Good Change", as PiS labels its conservative revolution, and opponents of the Government, mostly left-wing, liberal, and Christian-democrat voters. The conflict appears fundamental, concerns such issues as the constitutional order, geo-political orientation, and even the principal values that the Polish State should

protect and promote (religion, nation, family, tolerance, open society, freedom, etc.). The conflict is exacerbated by the political situation in Europe (Brexit, the so-called "refugee crisis"). Polish media supporting both camps report on these developments, sometimes even galvanising the radical and fundamental nature of the conflict. Also, the national symbols and founding myths of Poland are once again subject to heated debates. With reference to the issues debated in this thesis, one might say that the new government hopes to alter not only the current policies, but also to fundamentally alter Polish identity, neutering it further from the civic elements and confirming the hegemony of a primordial, essentialising ethnic identity.

The impact of both the current European turmoil and the conservative, nationalistic offensive in Poland on the identity of Polish EU officials could be an interesting subject for further research. One may wonder if, when confronted with this new "narrow" and sometimes xenophobic nationalism, their own national feelings remain unchanged. How do they live with the criticism of their country by the Commission on the one hand and the harsh criticism of the Commission by the authorities of their own country on the other? Will Brexit intensify their Europeanism or, on the contrary, make Poles more skeptical about identification with Europe?

Another interesting research question would be the one to be analysed and responded to in a couple of years. Some of my research participants, even if they understood their Europeanness in predominantly civic terms, suggested that their children may already be "born European". It would be interesting to see how the children of Polish EU officials, born and raised in Brussels, sometimes from a non-Polish father or mother, will embrace European identity. Will they perceive it in more cultural terms than their parents? What would be the basis of such (future) Europeanness?

Appendices

Appendix A

Follow-up questionnaire

I would kindly request to fill in this follow up questionnaire by ticking (or highlighting) right answers and giving explanation when it is needed. The questionnaire is part of a doctoral research on "The Community of Polish EU officials in Brussels" conducted under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Johan Leman at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (IMMRC).
The data collected is confidential and will only be used for research purposes at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven. Your help is highly appreciated!
For further enquiries please contact julia.rozanska@student.kuleuven.be

1. Do you plan to leave the EU institutions one day?
   Yes □ No □ I don't know yet □

2. Would you consider staying in Belgium after leaving the EU institutions?

   Yes □ No □ I don't know yet □

3. In which area do you live now? If you moved during the last 3 years, what was the motivation?

4. Do you master both of the official languages in Brussels? If not, are you learning them?

5. Do you feel well integrated in Belgium now? Please, explain.

6. Is your social life more developed than 3 years ago? Please, explain.

7. Are your contacts with the local population more intensive now than 3 years ago?

8. Has the "composition" of your friends changed significantly during these years? In what way?

9. Have the intensity, form and frequency of your contacts with your relatives and friends from Poland changed significantly? Please, explain.

10. Have you encountered any stereotypes related to 'Eurocrats' or have you ever been a target of xenophobic attitude because of being a 'Eurocrat'? To what extent are these views justified?

11. According to you, what is the attitude of the EU officials from "old" member states:

	highly positive	positive	neutral	negative	highly negative
toward the Polish EU officials					
toward Poles in general?					

12. How often do you attend social events of the Polish EU institutions community?

13. Do you consider the "EPS" google list as an important source of information?

14. With which of the following "identifications" would you describe yourself?

IDENTIFICATION	very relevant	relevant	somewhat relevant	not relevant
European				
Slav				
Pole				
Inhabitant of a specific region or local community in Poland				
World's citizen				
'Eurocrat'				
Expat				
Other				

15. Which of the following things are important for you?

	very important	important	somewhat important	not important
Family				
Friends				
Education				
Religion				
Prosperous life				
Career				
Public activity (politics, charity etc.)				

16. Please, list at least three main Polish national characteristics.

1.	
2.	
3.	

17. How do you assess the performance of Poland or Poles in the following fields?

	very important	important	somewhat important	not important at all
Political importance of Poland				
Economic achievements				
Science and technological achievements				
Achievements in sport				
Cultural achievements				
Other				

18. Are there any aspects in contemporary Poland, which you feel ashamed of as a Pole? If this is the case, please, specify and explain.

Yes □ No □

19. Which of the Polish historical events do you consider as the most important? Please, restrict your answer to max. 5.

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

20. To which of these things do you feel the most attached?

	very attached	attached	somewhat attached	not attached at all
Polish nation				
Polish landscape				
Polish history				
Polish high culture				
Polish popular culture				
Polish language				
Polish tradition				
Polish national ceremonies				

21. Which of the Polish historical figures (past or present) do you appreciate most? Why?

22. Are there situations where you feel more European, or, on the contrary, more Polish? Please explain.

23. Did you feel any particular link with other Poles during the grieve after the air crash in Smolensk?

24. Does it happen to you to criticize Poland or the Poles as a nation while talking to other Europeans? Please develop your answer, if possible.

25. Do you think that Poles have contributed much to the European cultural and scientific heritage? Please explain.

26. What are the main features all Europeans have in common, which generally distinguish the Europeans from non-Europeans? Please, indicate at least three.

1.	
2.	
3.	

27. Do you think that the identity of the 'Eurocrats' (irrespectively from their nationality) is more European than it is the case of average people in Belgium or in your home country?

28. What are the most important European values? Please, indicate at least three.

1.	
2.	
3.	

Background information

Age:
Do you have a permanent post (official)? Yes □ No □

Since when have you been living in Belgium?
Since when have you been working for the EU institutions?

Thank you!

Appendix B

Questionnaire:

I would kindly request to fill in this questionnaire by ticking (or highlighting) right answers and giving explanation when it is needed. The questionnaire is part of a doctoral research on "Polish EU Community in Brussels" conducted under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Johan Leman at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (IMMRC).

The data collected is confidential and will only be used for research purposes. Your help is highly appreciated!

For further enquiries please contact julia.rozanska@student.kuleuven.be

1. Why did you decide to migrate?

2. What were the reasons for taking part in the competition and working at the EU institutions?

3. What did you think of Brussels before coming here? How has your perception of Brussels changed after you settled here?

4. Do you plan to leave:

- Belgium? Yes □ No □ I don't know yet □

- the EU institutions one day? Yes □ No □ I don't know yet □

5. Where do you live? In case you live in Brussels, please indicate in which district do you live and why you chose it?

6. Is it important to you to have access to: (*Please, tick the right answers)*

	Yes	No
Shops with Polish products		
Polish restaurants		
Club for Polish people		
Polish services (Please, indicate which. *e.g.,* medical care, plumbers, hairdressers, *etc.*?)		
Polish culture (Please, specify *e.g.,* books, journals, films, theater, music)		

7. Please, indicate which of the official languages in Brussels you spoke when you arrived in Belgium?

□ French
□ Dutch
□ None of them

8. Do you find it important to learn both of the official languages in Brussels?
Yes □ No □

9. Which language do you speak most often outside the office?

□ Polish
□ English
□ French
□ Dutch
□ Other…… (*Please, indicate which*)

10. With whom do you live?

□ alone
□ with a Polish partner
□ with another expat partner
□ with a Belgian partner

11. Do you find it difficult to adapt to the local culture? Please, explain.

12. What is your perception of bilingualism and biculturalism of the host society? Do you think it may influence your adaptation in Belgium?

13. With representatives of which group do you spend your free time most often? Please, rate the answers from 3-0, where 3 stands for "very often", 2 for "often", 1 for "seldom", while 0: "not at all".

Polish people (not employed in the EU institutions)	
Belgians (not employed in the EU institutions)	
Belgian EU officials	
Polish EU officials	
Other EU officials	
Other foreigners not employed in the EU institutions	

14. Do you find it difficult to make Belgian friends? Please, explain.

15. Have you already encountered any stereotypical views on Poles personally while living in Belgium? In which situation? To what extent are these views justified?

16. Have you encountered any stereotypes related to 'Eurocrats' or have you ever been a target of xenophobic attitudes because of being a 'Eurocrat'? To what extent are these views justified?

17. Could you specify main advantages and disadvantages of living in Belgium. Please, indicate at least three of each, if possible)?

Advantages of living in Belgium	Disadvantages of living in Belgium
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

18. Has your lifestyle changed significantly since moving to Belgium? In what way?

19. If you are Catholic, do you attend:

□ Belgian mass
□ Polish mass
□ not relevant?

20. Where do you spend traditional festivities (Christmas, Easter, *etc.*) most often?

□ in Belgium
□ in Poland
□ in another country

21. Do you usually participate in Belgian public celebrations (*e.g.,* Carnival, *Ommegang*-Public Parade, *etc.*)?

Yes □ No □

22. What are your main sources of information? Please, tick the right answers.

	Polish	Belgian	Other
TV			
radio			
newspapers			
Internet			
other			

23. Are you interested in public issues concerning:

	YES	NO
Belgium		
Poland		
EU		

24. How often do you visit your home country?

25. How often are you in contact with your relatives and friends from Poland and what is the main way you keep contact with them: Internet□ by phone □ e-mail □ mail □ other □ ?

26. Do you feel homesickness? Yes □ No □

27. What are your main sources of information in case you are looking for a doctor, or a plumber, *etc.*?

28. Do you find your co-nationals working in the EU institutions critical regarding the local reality?
Yes □ No □
Why? Please, explain.

29. In your opinion, what is the attitude of the majority of Belgians:

	highly positive	positive	neutral	negative	highly negative
toward the EU officials					
toward Poles in general?					

30. What is the attitude of the EU officials from "old" member states:

	highly positive	positive	neutral	negative	highly negative
toward the Polish EU officials					
toward Poles?					

31. Do you find the Polish EU community open (eager to socialize with) for:

	Yes	No
Belgians		
other expats		
ethnic minority groups		
other Poles in Belgium that do not work in EU institutions?		

32. Do you attend any social events restricted to EU employees? How often?

33. With which of the following "identifications" would you describe yourself? Please rate the answers from "very relevant" to "not relevant at all".

IDENTIFICATION	very relevant	relevant	somewhat relevant	not relevant
European				
Slav				
Pole				
Inhabitant of specific region or local community in Poland				
World's citizen				
' Eurocrat'				
Expat				
Other (*Please, specify*)				

34. Which of the following values are important for you? Please rate the answers from "very important" to "not important at all".

VALUE	very important	important	somewhat important	not important
Family				
Friends				
Education				
Religion				
Prosperous life				
Career				
Public activity (politics, charity, *etc.*)				

35. Please, list at least three main Polish national characteristics.

1.	
2.	
3.	

36. What is your personal assessment of the following phenomena related to Poland?

	very important	important	somewhat important	not important at all
Political importance of Poland				
Economic achievements				
Science and technological achievements				
Achievements in sport				
Cultural achievements				
Other(*which*?)				

37. Are there any aspects in contemporary Poland which you feel ashamed of as a Pole?
Yes □ No □

If this is the case, please, specify and explain.

38. Which of the Polish historical events do you consider as the most important? Please, restrict your answer to max. 5 and explain.

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

39. To which of these things do you feel the most attached? Please rate the answers from "very attached" to "not attached at all".

	very attached	attached	somewhat attached	not attached at all
Polish nation				
Polish landscape				
Polish history				
Polish high culture				
Polish popular culture				
Polish language				
Polish tradition				
Polish national ceremonies				

40. Which of the Polish historical figures (past or present) do you appreciate most? Why?

41. Are there situations where you feel more European, or, on the contrary, more Polish? Please explain.

42. Are there any views or values that you have abandoned or adopted since

- you left Poland?

- you started to work in the institutions?

43. Did you feel any particular link with other Poles during the grieve after the air crash in Smolensk?

44. Does it happen to you to criticize Poland or the Poles as a nation while talking to other Europeans? Please develop your answer, if possible.

45. Do you think that Poles have contributed much to the European cultural and scientific heritage? Please explain.

46. Do you think Poland or the Poles can serve as a positive example to other Europeans? If yes, in what aspects?

47. What are the main features all Europeans have in common, which generally distinguish the Europeans from non-Europeans? Please, indicate at least three.

1.	
2.	
3.	

48. Do you think that the identity of the 'Eurocrats' (irrespectively from their nationality) is more European than it is the case of average people in Belgium or in your home country?

49. What are the most important European values? Please, indicate at least three.

1.	
2.	
3.	

The respondents who do not have children scholarized in Belgium are kindly requested to go directly to the "background information section"

50. In case you have children at school age, do they attend to European school? Please, explain your motivation.

51. Which language do you speak with your children?

□ Polish
□ French
□ Dutch
□ English
□ Other……..

52. Who are their friends (*You can choose more than one answer*)?

□ Belgians
□ Polish
□ Other foreigners

53. Was it difficult to your children to accommodate in a new culture, new society? Please, explain.

Yes □ No □

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Age: ……

Gender: Male □ female □

Do you have a permanent post (official)? Yes □ No □

How many people live (approximately) in your home city/town/village? ……

Have you done university studies? Yes □ No □

Do you have any experience of studying or working abroad? Yes □ No □

If yes, for how long?

How long have you been living in Belgium?

How long have you been working for the EU institutions?

Thank you very much for filling the questionnaire!

Appendix C

The interview guide

INTRODUCTION

Details about myself and the research (purpose of the study)
Permission, to record, to take notes, and quote - anonymity and blurring identities guaranteed
Promises: copy of report, final thesis, articles.
Rights of the research participants: At any point of the research, if you want to drop out of the research group, you are free to do it without any justification.

QUESTIONS

1. Could you tell me a little bit about your way to where you are now?

SOCIAL NETWORKS

2. Was it easy to make friends here? How did you meet them, at what occasions?
3. Could you describe the circles of your friends? There is one or more? (Do your work-related friendships stretch to your private life?)
4. Have these contacts evolved significantly during last years? Which networks faded away and how come?
5. Do your compatriots here in Belgium (still) play important role in your social life?
6. Where do you know more persons that you would describe as close friends, here or in Poland?

CONTACTS WITH POLAND

7. *Some of respondents mentioned they felt increasingly distant from their Polish friends. That is why I would like to ask about the frequency and quality of your contacts with friends in Poland?* Are they really growing distant? What are the reasons? (To what extent is it due to the fact you live in Brussels and to what extent is it simply related to different professional experiences, new roles (family), *etc*.).
8. Do you understand Poland today? If you read Polish Internet or watch TV, do you have the impression that you are interested in the same things as your compatriots in Poland, do you see the reality in the same way? Please develop.
9. How would you feel about coming back to Poland, if your salary and working condition would be similar as here?

DAILY LIFE

10. What kinds of social activities are you involved in? Are you a member of any associations (social or sport clubs)?
11. Are the places you attend (clubs, bars, restaurants) in your free time expat oriented/ popular amongst Belgians?
12. Do you have any interest in the issues of your quarter: cultural activities, political life, infrastructural projects, *etc.*
13. How much do you work and why? Do you work extra time? If yes, why? (*As far as I know there is no extra pay, and the limit of number of extra hours you can recover, so why are you staying? Is it about your boss? Is it about the work ethics? Or, you think that what you are doing is important for EU and you are ready for this sacrifice? Or, maybe, just what you are doing is interesting for you quite apart from the ideological considerations?).*

ADAPTATION

14. What does the term adaptation mean to you?
15. Where do you feel you belong? Which place you identify with? Please, develop your response.
16. If the whole Commission was transferred to another city, such as Paris, Prague or somewhere on Canary Islands, would you bother? Would you miss Brussels?
17. Would you like to live in a city inhabited only by 'Eurocrats' and expats?

POLES IN BELGIUM

18. What is the attitude of the Polish 'Eurocrats' towards the manual workers/other categories of Polish migrants in Belgium? Has the attitude evolved across the time? Why?
19. Would you say there is a Polish community in Belgium? Who is included? Who is out?

IDEOLOGY

20. Do you think your work makes a difference and in what terms?
21. Does the job require specific attitude (pro-European) in your view?
22. What does the European integration represent to you?

EUROPEAN IDENTITY

23. What does it mean to be a European? Is it something you choose or something you are born with?
24. Are Poles more or less European or the same as Belgians and other Western Europeans?
25. Have you become more European since working for the EU? In what way?

POLISHNESS

26. What does it mean to be Polish? Is it related to how you live or maybe something you feel? Or, is it just something you are, independently of how you feel about?
27. Is it important to you to practice Polish traditions, to remain "Polish"?

CLOSING QUESTIONS
Can we stay in touch by e-mail in case of any further queries?
Thank you!

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Summary

This doctoral dissertation explores the issues of adaptation and integration of the Polish EU officials in Brussels, as well as of their evolving identification.

The present work partly builds upon my previous study of this group of highly skilled migrants. While drawing on the Eriksen's (2007) complexity approach to the social and cultural integration, I analyse attitudes, elements of daily life and socializing patterns of the researched group to find out, *inter alia,* whether they make or belong to any community, what their attachments are and how they draw and are subject to boundaries. I also verify if they are, as some scholars suggested, becoming an embryo of a future, supranational European nation: to what extent they remain Polish, what Polishness actually means in their case, and whether they are developing any European identification. If so, how can the latter co-exist with the ethnic component?

To this effect, I adopted the emic perspective: I let my research participants speak; I noted their experiences, confessions and reflections. Studying EU officials is not easy – the research presented many challenges characteristic for the anthropological study of elites. Thus, despite my "quasi-insider" position, I needed to rely more on the interviews, questionnaires and informal accounts than on traditional anthropological participant observation.

The researched group constitutes a separate category, in-between immigrants and expatriates. Despite their potential long-term settlement, they tend to limit their social activity to other EU officials and expatriates. Contrary to previous research findings in this field, they are rather inclusive – their social circles comprise representatives of various nationalities, not only compatriots. However, they hardly socialise with Belgians. In fact, it may be argued that they construct boundaries separating them from the local population. This may be related to

the legacy of real or imaginary stereotypes they feel they are prey of, but also a symbolic act of adherence to the category of EU officials. Overall, they do not seem interested neither in the integration with the larger society nor with other Poles, but rather with a larger community of EU officials. In the same time, although they adapt easily to the functioning in the multinational Brussels and in the Belgian "reality", culturally they remain Polish and maintain strong transnational links with the home country.

As to the identification patterns, my research participants remain attached to the Polish culture and language. They also see their Polishness as an important aspect of their European identification, in addition to their professional identification and the attachment to the common interest, developed in the process of *engrenage* in the EU institutions.

Samenvatting

Deze doctorale scriptie onderzoekt de adaptatie en integratie van de Poolse EU ambtenaren in Brussel en de ontwikkeling van hun identificatie.

Het huidige werk bouwt deels verder op mijn vorige studie van deze groep van hoog geschoolde migranten. Steunend op Eriksen's (2007) complexiteitsbenadering van de sociaal-culturele integratie, analyseer ik houdingen, elementen uit het dagelijkse leven en socialisatiepatronen bij de onderzochte groep om onder andere te achterhalen of zij een gemeenschap zijn of tot een gemeenschap behoren, welke hun gehechtheid is en hoe zij grenzen uittekenen of er zich aan onderwerpen. Ik ga ook na of zij, zoals sommige onderzoekers suggereren, een embryo worden voor een toekomstige, supranationale Europese natie: tot op welke hoogte blijven zij Polen, wat betekent het Poolse in hun geval, en ontwikkelen ze een Europese identificatie? En als dat het geval is, hoe kan dit samen bestaan met de etnische component?

Met dat voor ogen, nam ik een emic perspectief aan: Ik liet de mensen uit mijn onderzoek spreken; ik nam nota van hun ervaringen, van wat zij bekenden en wat hun overdenkingen waren. EU ambtenaren bestuderen is niet gemakkelijk – het onderzoek stond voor veel uitdagingen die kenmerkend zijn voor de antropologische studie van elites. Spijt mijn "quasi-insider" positie moest ik meer op inteerviews, vragenlijsten en informele gesprekken steunen dan op de traditionele antropologische participerende observatie.

De onderzochte groep maakt een aparte categorie uit, tussen immigranten en expats. Spijt hun potentiële lange-termijn verblijf, hebben ze de neiging hun sociale activiteiten niet verder uit te breiden dan tot de andere EU ambtenaren en expats. In tegenstelling tot vroegere onderzoeksbevindingen op dit terrein, zijn ze naar mijn inzien eerder inclusief – hun sociale cirkels bevatten mensen van verschillende nationaliteiten, niet alleen landgenoten. Maar zij

socialiseren nauwelijks met Belgen. Men mag stellen dat ze grenzen opbouwen die hen afgescheiden houden van de lokale bevolking. Dit kan te wijten zijn aan wat blijft leven van reële of ingebeelde stereotiepen waarvan zij zich slachtoffer voelen te zijn, maar het kan ook teruggaan op een symbolische act, het besef van te behoren tot de categorie van EU ambtenaren. Algemeen gesproken hebben ze geen belangstelling noch voor de integratie in de bredere samenleving noch met andere Polen, maar ligt hun interesse veeleer in de bredere EU "gemeenschap" van EU ambtenaren. Tegelijk, alhoewel ze zich gemakkelijk aanpassen aan het functioneren in het multinationale Brussel en aan de Belgische "realiteit", blijven ze cultureel gesproken Pools en houden ze vast aan sterke transnationale banden met hun land van herkomst.

Wat verder de identificatiepatronen betreft, blijven mijn onderzochte personen gehecht aan de Poolse cultuur en taal. Zij zien hun Pools-zijn ook als een belangrijk aspect van hun Europese identificatie, wat zich voegt bij hun professionele identificatie en bij de gehechtheid aan het algemeen belang, zoals dit ontwikkeld wordt in het proces van inkapseling in de EU instellingen.

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